

# **Burning of African American Churches in Louisiana and Perceptions of Race Relations**

**Louisiana Advisory Committee to the  
United States Commission on Civil Rights**

Transcript of a Community Forum  
Held July 8–9, 1996, Baker, Louisiana

### **The United States Commission on Civil Rights**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, first created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and reestablished by the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the Federal Government. By the terms of the 1983 act, as amended by the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study and collection of information relating to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections; and preparation and issuance of public service announcements and advertising campaigns to discourage discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

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An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and section 3(d) of the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference that the Commission may hold within the State.

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**Louisiana Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

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New Orleans

**Mr. John S. Baker**  
Baton Rouge

**Ms. Lorna E. Bourg**  
New Iberia

**Ms. Karen E. Dugas**  
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**Dr. Robert L. Ford**  
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**Dr. Laurabeth Hicks**  
Baker

**Mr. Robert A. Kutcher**  
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**Mr. Salvador G. Longoria**  
New Orleans

**Ms. Roberta Madden**  
Baton Rouge

**Ms. Glenoa Keller Parks**  
Baker

**Ms. Rupert F. Richardson**  
Baton Rouge

**Mr. Charles H. Tubre**  
New Orleans

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*The community forum of the Louisiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights convened at 6:00 p.m., July 8, 1996, at the Baker Civic Auditorium, 3325 Groom Road, Baker, Louisiana, with Louisiana Committee Chairperson William P. Quigley presiding. Other members of the Advisory Committee present were Lorna E. Bourg, Laurabeth Hicks, Salvador G. Longoria, Roberta Madden, and Glenda Keller Parks. Also attending were Commission Chairperson Mary Frances Berry and Commissioner Yvonne Lee. Also present were Civil Rights Commission Staff Director Mary K. Mathews and Central Regional Office Director Melvin L. Jenkins.*

## Proceedings

**Mr. Quigley.** Good evening. My name is Bill Quigley, and I am the Chair of the Louisiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and I call the meeting to order.

For the benefit of those in the audience, I want to introduce the other members of the Louisiana Advisory Committee. The members that are here right now are Lorna Bourg of New Iberia, Dr. Laurabeth Hicks of here in Baker, Salvador Longoria of New Orleans; Roberta Madden of Baton Rouge; Glenda Keller Parks of Baker.

We are also pleased to have with us the Chair of the U.S. Commission, the Honorable Mary Frances Berry, and we have another one of the members of the Commission, Ms. Yvonne Lee, who are also present. And we have the Agency Staff Director, Mary Mathews.

I also want to introduce staff from the Commission's regional office in Kansas City, Melvin Jenkins, who is the Regional Director—where is Melvin? Okay, there he is. Farella Robinson, who is the civil rights analyst, who has worked very hard in helping put this together; and JoAnn Daniels of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The Commission is an independent, bipartisan agency, first established by Congress in 1957 and reestablished in 1983. Under our charter we're directed to:

Investigate complaints alleging deprivation of rights to vote by reason of race, color, religion, age, sex, disability, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

We are also authorized to study and collect information relating to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution, because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability,

or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

We are directed to appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or, again, in the administration of justice;

We are to serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin;

We are to submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and to Congress;

And to issue public service announcements to discourage discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws.

The Commission has 51 Advisory Committees—one for each State and the District of Columbia, and each is composed of citizens who are familiar with local and State civil rights issues.

The members of the Louisiana Commission, like all of the other members of the Commission, serve without compensation and assist the Commission in its factfinding, investigating, and information dissemination functions.

We are here tonight to conduct the first part of a 2-day community forum on race relations in the towns of Baker and Zachary, Louisiana, in the aftermath of recent fires at the black churches.

We also are here to focus on Federal and local law enforcement efforts to solve the fires. Hopefully this forum will give individuals an opportunity to discuss some of their concerns and ideas about the reasons that these first occurred and also provide an avenue to search for solutions.

Our goal is to fulfill the guidelines that have been set by the Commission in terms of the Louisiana Advisory Commission so that we can be the eyes and ears of the community to bring back information to our representatives in Washington so that they can fulfill their congressionally mandated function.

Information that relates to the topic of the meeting will be especially helpful to the Advisory Committee. I want to advise everyone that the proceedings are being recorded by a public stenographer, and will be sent to the Civil Rights Commission in Washington, D.C., for its consideration.

Information provided may also be used by the Advisory Committee to plan future activities.

There are a few ground rules I want to make sure that everybody understands and that are on the record at the outset. This is a public meeting. It is open to the media and the general public. But it is already fairly fully scheduled with persons who will be providing information within the limited time period that we have available.

We ask that the time period be strictly adhered to, and that in that time period we will have a presentation by the participant, followed by questions from Committee members.

For people who have information but are not scheduled to present on the agenda that's available to everyone in the public, but they want to make statements, we have scheduled an open session at the end of our session tonight and at the end of our session tomorrow, 8:30 to 9:00 tonight, and 2:30 to 3:00 tomorrow. Anyone for whom that time is inconvenient or they're not able to do it at that time, should contact Ms. Daniels over there at the table by the entrance to schedule either a written statement that you could submit to the Commission or to ask her for some specific time that you would be allotted in that open forum period.

We encourage people to submit additional information, comments, any sort of data to the Commission on Civil Rights by mail or to the staff, and the mailing address for the record is 400 State Avenue, Suite 908, Kansas City, Kansas 66101.

The record of this meeting will close on August 10, 1996.

Just one or two other words of caution. There certainly is controversy in the subjects that we're

discussing, but we want to make sure that everyone who makes a presentation understands that we have to follow the law and that we are not interested in defaming or degrading any person or organization.

That goes for the members of the Commission, the Advisory Committee. It goes for members of the general public, anyone who wants to have any input on this.

We want to make sure that all aspects of the issues are represented, therefore, knowledgeable persons with a wide variety of experience and viewpoints have been invited to share their information with us and anyone that feels aggrieved or defamed or degraded by any statements made in these proceedings should contact our staff either during this or at the conclusion so that we can provide them with an opportunity to supplement the record or they can file written proceedings.

I urge all persons making presentations to keep this in mind and to be fair, accurate, and judicious in their statements.

We appreciate everybody's willingness to come here tonight and those that will be here tomorrow. Now I will ask the Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Dr. Mary Frances Berry, to share some opening remarks with you, and we've asked her to chair the first part of the meeting, so I turn the meeting over to her, and we're very, very happy that she's here.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you very much, Mr. Quigley. I really do appreciate that. But before I say anything at all, I'm going to ask my colleague, Commissioner Yvonne Lee, who came all the way from California to be with us—we asked that as many Commissioners as possible come to these forums that are being held in the places that were hardest hit by the fires, and she very graciously and responsibly agreed to come all the way from California to come to this meeting here, so I want to see if she has any opening comments she'd like to make. Ms. Lee.

**Ms. Lee.** Thanks very much, Chair Berry. I just want to share my thanks to the State Advisory Committee and also to the Commission for putting this together.

Being from California, I just want to say that this is not viewed in the West Coast as an isolated rash

of violence in the Southern States. This is America's problem, and being an Asian American, we learned about hatred and violence about 13 years ago when Vincent Chin was killed in Detroit purely because he was an Asian American.

I'm here tonight and tomorrow to learn from the community so that I can go back to California and to the Asian American community to how we can renew and reunite America, because this is America's problem and it will take all of our efforts to renew our commitment to defend justice and to go toward our intolerance toward violence against anybody, just because of our differences in religion, race, and ethnicity.

So thank you very much for having me here.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you very much, and then I wanted to see if our Staff Director, Mary Kay Mathews, would come up and just say something. You can some stand over here. Sit in my chair.

**Staff Director Mathews.** Thank you, Madam Chair. The recent arson attacks on African American churches reminds us of some of this nation's darkest days.

Today's community forum is a step in the right direction to counter the forces that manifest racial intolerance. I want to extend my special appreciation to Regional Director Melvin Jenkins for his able leadership, and for the regional office staff, in particular JoAnn Daniels for her exceptional dedication. JoAnn. And Farella Robinson for all the effort that she put into making today's event, making arrangements for today's event.

This community forum is extremely important. Racial tensions are all too prevalent throughout the Nation.

We, at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, have been assessing causes of racial and ethnic tensions for a number of years, and the Louisiana SAC forum tonight provides an opportunity for the community to come together to address these issues of concern and to make end roads to improving racial harmony.

Over the years the Louisiana SAC has produced some very good reports in response to the arson attacks that have targeted African American places of worship. The State Advisory Committee held a meeting on March 28, 1996, and this briefly brought together members of law enforcement, the

president of the Louisiana branch of the NAACP, a city judge, and religious leaders to examine the situation in the State.

The same body has gathered a number of individuals whom I am anxious to hear from today and tomorrow to further assess the causes of fires in African American churches and to evaluate the investigation.

I hope this evening to learn some new information that will help all of us develop some solutions to this decisive issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay, staff director. Now, the question is the burning question of the hour—if I say burning—is why we're here, what are we doing here?

And instead of making an opening statement that somebody wrote up for me, let me just say that the reason why we're here, and the reason why we were in Alabama last week, and the reason why we will be in these other States that were hardest hit is we're here because, at the Commission, one of our jobs is to monitor what law enforcement officials are doing, that is, how well the BATF, the FBI, and State and local people are pursuing their obligation to find out who set these fires.

To date they haven't found the culprits here, unless they found them right before I got here, while I was on the way to the airport.

And so the question is what's happening with law enforcement. Also how do people feel about what law enforcement is doing in terms of how it's carrying out its responsibilities.

And the second thing we want to do is in the area of trying to figure out whether racial, religious, or ethnic tensions in this community might have provided the social context in which this kind of behavior could take place. And we do that, one, because it's our job to do that, and the other is because we've been engaged in this racial tensions project for about 5 years now, when we've been trying to call attention to the rising tide of racial antagonism, which nobody really wants to talk about very seriously, around all sorts of issues that are very polarizing and very divisive.

So we are here to hear from government people, to hear from law enforcement people, and any community people who want to be heard from,



either in this room or outside this room. I'll listen to anybody—about any of these concerns.

I know too that you had forums in this area before. Cleo Fields, the Congressman from down here, held one a week or so ago, and I talked to Deval Patrick, who is the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights over the weekend about the forum—he and Jim Johnson from BATF came down here.

I've had ongoing conversations with them in Washington and elsewhere about this whole effort, but it's part of our job to ask different questions than the kinds of questions other people are asking, and I very much appreciate the Louisiana State Advisory Committee being willing to set this meeting on such short notice, and the staff putting it together so that we can pursue these objectives.

That done, that's what I'm here for, so let's move on and let somebody that has something else to say—the first person we'd like to hear from is the Honorable Bobby Simpson, who is the mayor of Baker, Louisiana. Could you please come up, Mr. Mayor?

**Statement of Bobby Simpson, Mayor, Baker, Louisiana**

**Mayor Simpson.** Good evening. I'll start my presentation with a map of the city of Baker, in case you have any questions about the areas that we're talking about.

First of all I'd like to welcome you to our city. Since the burning of the churches in our area, we've probably had more Federal officials in our area than the whole other 30 years of our incorporation put together.

It saddens us to think that the only thing that can get Federal officials to our town is something negative, because we have a very, very positive community.

Dr. Hicks lives in our community, and Ms. Parks, they introduced you from Baker. I'm not sure I've ever met you.

**Ms. Parks.** I work here. I live in Baton Rouge.

**Mayor Simpson.** Okay. Good to have you with us. I didn't think there was somebody here that I didn't know.

Anyway, we are very proud of our community. I'm a graduate of all the schools here in Baker.

I've lived here all my life. Baker is my hometown, and we are extremely proud of that.

We've gone through all the racial experiments of the sixties and seventies in Baker, and we think we've come out on the other side in good shape. We have a well-integrated society here, and I'm telling you this, because that's what they asked me to tell you about was the demographics of Baker.

It's not what I like to speak about. I like to speak about Bakerites and being Bakerites, not in terms of color or religion or anything else.

We had a prayer breakfast here Friday morning in this building. There were 550 to 600 people here of all religions, all races. My pastor was the guest speaker. My pastor just happens to be Ken Ellis, who played football for the Green Bay Packers back in the seventies and the eighties, a black man.

I go to a church of some 5,000 people. About 40 percent of those are African American.

We have very few segregated segments of our community, very few. We are well-integrated. We are probably racially about 65 percent white, 35 percent black, somewhere between 60 and 65 percent—since we haven't had a census in—since the 1990s.

The city of Baker, back in 1991, went to single-member districts, not because it had to, but because it wanted to. A vote of the people said we should have a minority district in the city of Baker. We now have that.

The city of Baker's school-age-children, which are about 2,500 in number, go to East Baton Rouge Parish School System, which the East Baton Rouge Parish School System is under the longest running desegregation suit in America, since 1956.

Those 2,500 school-aged children are about 50-50 in their racial makeup. We as a city are now undergoing trying to be the first constitutionally mandated in the State of Louisiana independent school system. We would like to manage our own school system.

We would like for all the children that live in Baker to go to school in Baker. Right now those 2,500 children in Baker go to 62 different schools in this parish. We have been bused from one end to the other.

Ms. Berry, I don't know if you have children or not, but if you move into Baker today, across the street from the middle school, they would bus your child to the middle of Baton Rouge and take a black child from the middle of Baton Rouge and bus him to Baker.

We said enough of this illogic, so that's one of the fights that we have going on.

But it's altogether 83 percent of the citizens of Baker voted to have its own independent school system. We had 65 percent of the State also voted to allow us to do that, and 66 percent of the parish. So we feel that our fight is good.

Just to tell you a little bit about what happened in Baker, and as you'll see it's 7 o'clock and I know we're way behind our schedule, but at 8 o'clock our Judge, John Engelsman, is scheduled to speak, and I'm going to let him speak to you about what happened in Baker, because he was the organizer of most of the things that happened here.

Baker has always been a community for taking care of its own, whether it's as a result of a hurricane, a fire, a tornado, or flooding. Back in the sixties Baker was heavily hit time and time again with flooding, and we've always taken care of our own.

The burning of these churches was no different. We had meetings right after that. We organized through the churches, through the government, through the local people. We had fund raisers, and Judge Engelsman will tell you about those, and we took care of our own.

And we say that because the folks at this church are part of our church community. The city of Baker, while being the 25th largest city in the State, we have a population by California standards of probably kind of small, with 13,500 and we're the 25th largest city in the State, out of 303 cities.

So we are a small community, but we've always taken care of our own. We have 42 pastors that reside in our community, so we are a heavily churched community. There are all denominations here, and we are very proud of that, while we do host one of the largest prayer breakfasts in the State, and it's been going on for quite a long period of time.

But we take the burning of a church to heart. And it wouldn't matter whether it was a black

church or a white church, because the churches that I grew up in, it's an affront on the church of the Almighty God. And that's where we stick with this.

The thought pattern, the audacity of someone who can take gasoline and set fire to one of these institutions is a criminal mind that I can't even fathom. You heard of the Bible Belt. Well, we're kind of the product of that.

I grew up in the hell, fire, and damnation generation here, and I'm not too sure you could have put a gun to my head and made me throw some type of flammable liquid at a church. It's just totally foreign to everything that I believe in.

And we've treated it that way and this whole community has come together with that in mind, but it has done some good things and I know that's one of the things that you want to hear.

We had this meeting and it brought people together that were not divided, but just didn't know each other, and come to find out the deacons at the only churches—only one of the churches is actually in the corporate limits of Baker, and that's the St. Paul Free Baptist.

The deacon there had two sons who went to school with me in 1970 and 1971, and we got to know that, and he now comes by and drinks coffee with me. He also was part of our prayer breakfast.

So it's done some things. It's also allowed us to have access into the community right around the church to where they now feel that they can come and say well, Mayor, we want to have a garbage pickup day in our area, we're trying to teach our young kids community pride, can you organize that for us, and we've done that.

So it's been good in that respect. But folks, and I know you're wanting to talk to law enforcement people, and I'm not one of those, God forbid. They have the hardest job in America today.

But we too want this caught. It's just totally foreign and I don't care who it is, it needs to be found and it needs to be dealt with as severely as we possibly can.

So I'm not sure what kind of presentation you wanted, but we do welcome you to our community. This is a building that we're glad to provide for you, and we'll be glad to assist you tomorrow in

any way possible. As one of the press men said, we will have coffee here in the morning.

So if there are questions that you—would be more than happy to answer questions if you have questions.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Does any member of the Committee have a question for the mayor?

**Mr. Longoria.** I do have a question.

**Dr. Berry.** Yes.

**Mr. Longoria.** Where is St. Paul Free Baptist? It's not on the map—it's outside or—

**Mayor Simpson.** You go down Groom Road—

**Dr. Berry.** The question is where is St. Paul's, and we're finding out on the map.

**Mayor Simpson.** You see the very end of this first line that's kind of brown, actually St. Paul's sits right on that line. It's right here. Most of the attendants of that church live in this little area. This is basically a black community, the last streets to the west part of our town.

This is what's referred to here as Leland College, where some of you may remember that Leland College is one of the first black ministerial colleges in America, and the college itself sat on this little area right here and there's still a group of black ministers that maintain the college foundation with the hopes that one day that we're going to reestablish leaders.

Back in the sixties—

**Dr. Berry.** You need to talk into a microphone.

**Mayor Simpson.** Back in the sixties and seventies Leland became one of the Peace Corps sites and its dormitories were still used and sometime in the seventies is when it was done away with, but the foundation still exists, but the church itself sits right there.

The other church, which you have the minister here tonight from Sweethome, is on Sunshine Road, which is right next to the yellow area. Okay. It's about almost down to Thomas Road, which is the very southern road on this.

So those are the two areas—now, there were two burnt at Sunshine. There was the church and then the Benevolent Society, which is right next door. They're side by side.

And that was on Sunshine, and then the other is right off of Groom Road. Okay.

And by the way, the yellow area is our minority district.

**Ms. Lee.** I have a question. Mr. Mayor, how large is your police force?

**Mayor Simpson.** We have an active police force, I believe—I think my chief—no, he's not here. Thirty-one active police officers, and I think there's another 28 to 30 reserve officers, which according to southern standards, we're way up there when you look at the amount of population that we have.

**Dr. Berry.** Ms. Bourg has a question.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you so much. I did have a couple of questions. You had mentioned earlier in your remarks that you felt there were very few segregated segments in the community, and then I noticed that you mentioned that while you were not necessarily divided, it brought people together who did not know each other.

And then you spoke about needs in the area surrounding the church that were fairly basic kinds of needs, of garbage pickup and community pride, that the communities across the area are struggling with.

**Mayor Simpson.** Let me clarify garbage pickup. That was like the trash bash day.

**Ms. Bourg.** I understood that.

**Mayor Simpson.** They have garbage pickup.

**Ms. Bourg.** And then you spoke that this area where one church was is a basically black area.

**Mayor Simpson.** Right.

**Ms. Bourg.** And then you spoke about this as being a minority area. So it seems to emerge that while we have communities that may not necessarily be divided, they don't know each other and there still are perhaps segments in our society—how would you see we could build bridges between communities so that we would know each other and create a different atmosphere in our communities?

And then I had a followup question.

**Mayor Simpson.** Okay. That's probably not fair to ask a former educator, because I think it still goes back to education. In East Baton Rouge Parish we're doing more to divide our communities than probably anywhere in the Nation, that is not under one of these court-ordered desegregations.

I mean, you've got to realize we've got kids that live next door to each other who are going to different schools. In the city of Baker every 2 years you are bused to a different school, so an elementary child starts out in the kindergarten and first grade making friends—and I'm going to tell you, black kids, white kids, they're going to make friends, and they're going to come home and they're going to ask you to send a sandwich or a candy bar to Johnny, and he's going to do that.

And our wisdom in this parish, every 2 years we split him from his peer group.

I taught ninth grade algebra. By the time I got ninth graders, they were so angry at society that it made it almost impossible to teach. Not only are you breaking them away from their peer groups, you've also got to remember that these kids have probably better than 60 percent chance of living in a broken home. So they have, or he or she have tremendous problems with relationships. So my thought is, one of the first things you need to do, is get back to a local community concept.

I think that's very, very important in the formative years, and in a community the size of Baker, like I said, 13,500, that's very manageable, but they've taken us and like I say, they send us to 62 different schools, so you lose a lot of that community orientation.

We do things here like we have Christmas in the park. We have Buffalo Festival. We do an eye care day. We do a lot of things with our kids. This summer is the first time that we're sponsoring our own summer recreation program.

So we're doing a lot of things with kids to try to bring them together, but you've got to remember, 6, 7 hours a day they spend at school, if they spend those at different schools, you're making it very difficult on kids to have community pride.

**Ms. Bourg.** May I follow up with a question? Are there any methods of recording hate crimes or incidents in the area, either prior to or subsequent to the church burnings? Like you have a cancer registry. Is there anything sort of central place to report crimes or acts of violence or vandalism that might be targeted against certain—

**Mayor Simpson.** I would have to defer that to Mr. Hymel. He may know somebody from the U.S. attorney's Office involving the local—we

have an elected police chief who runs our police department.

**Ms. Bourg.** I didn't mean it as a specific question. I meant it to be a local question. Do you record that?

**Mayor Simpson.** Again, we have an elected police chief. We have 911 and everything is recorded at 911. They have what—and Mr. Browning probably can speak to it, if it involves arson, there's an arson task force for this parish, and I think everything is turned over to you all, is that not true?

**Ms. Bourg.** So would there be a hate crime category like an arson category?

**Mayor Simpson.** That I don't know. That I don't know.

**Dr. Berry.** Does anyone else over here have a question? If not, then I have a couple.

**Mayor Simpson.** Okay.

**Dr. Berry.** First of all, to follow up on Ms. Bourg's question, if you as mayor observed a quote, "hate crime," which seemed to you to be resulting from religious or racial animus, would there be a hate crime registry or some number you report, or you'd just call 911?

**Mayor Simpson.** 911.

**Dr. Berry.** And so you, as mayor, are not aware of anybody—I'm not talking about as part of your responsibility, I'm talking about as a citizen—you're not aware of any particular focus on collecting hate crime information, either before or after the burnings?

**Mayor Simpson.** No, ma'am.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay, that's a good answer. That gives us some information. The second thing is—

**Mayor Simpson.** And to my knowledge there's never been anything that's specifically been pinpointed as a hate crime up to this point in time.

**Dr. Berry.** In other words, there have never been any hate crimes to your knowledge?

**Mayor Simpson.** Not of a serious—we haven't had a murder in the city of Baker in I can't remember.

**Dr. Berry.** You haven't had any graffiti put on churches or synagogues?

**Mayor Simpson.** We've had some graffiti, yes, at schools and things, but basically not at the synagogues. Like I say, the people around here still believe that God might strike you dead.

**Dr. Berry.** Did you know that graffiti that purports to personify someone racially or ethnically in a derogatory way is referred to in hate crime statistics as a hate crime? Did you know that they were categorized as hate crimes?

**Mayor Simpson.** No, ma'am.

**Dr. Berry.** You didn't know that?

**Mayor Simpson.** I'm not a criminologist.

**Dr. Berry.** No, I mean as a local citizen.

**Mayor Simpson.** No.

**Dr. Berry.** So when somebody says hate crime, you don't think of graffiti?

**Mayor Simpson.** No.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay.

**Mayor Simpson.** But—

**Dr. Berry.** I just want to know—

**Mayor Simpson.**—no one has ever come to my office and said there's a hate crime. The term hate crime—this is my first to hear the term hate crime.

**Dr. Berry.** I'm just asking for information. I'm not judging.

**Mayor Simpson.** No, it's just that we need to be on the same ground, so I—hate crime has never—is not something I know that we track, that I'm aware of.

**Dr. Berry.** So that it would be your impression, would it be, that most people in your town would not be familiar with the notion of hate crime as a category?

**Mayor Simpson.** I wouldn't think so. I would defer to Ms. Hicks. She's a local resident.

**Dr. Berry.** All right. Well, I just wanted—so that in itself tells us something. I don't know what but it tells us something.

Can I go back to Ms. Bourg. You had a question about the areas. Might I suggest that in the yellow area on your map is probably one of the most segregated areas and it is an all-black subdivision, and it's very affluent. Most professors from Southern and things—that's one of the few bastions of a segregated area, that and the Leland area.

But there are no exclusive white subdivisions or anything of that nature in this city?

Are you saying that housing in Baker is desegregated?

**Mayor Simpson.** Yes, ma'am.

**Dr. Berry.** So there is nothing anyone could identify as black housing or white housing except this one affluent, relatively affluent—

**Mayor Simpson.** If you had a couple of hundred thousand dollars, you might be able to get into the subdivision that we're talking about. But no, there are some areas that are poverty—and we'd like to talk to you all about that if we can get the Federal Government to change some of the grant situations to where we can help in that area, but I'm not sure this is the forum, but I'd be more than happy to take off on that one.

**Dr. Berry.** Well, you can say anything you like. The second thing is the school desegregation and busing. Is that a source of tension in this community or has it been?

**Mayor Simpson.** No, it's been going on since 1982, and I explain it this way. East Baton Rouge Parish is becoming a third world country. You have the very elite that can afford to send their kids to private school, and then you have the very poor, and they're here because they have nowhere else to go, and that's what's happening in this parish.

If you'll check the statistics of the surrounding parishes, you'll see that the growth in the surrounding parishes is unbelievable.

**Dr. Berry.** And do most white children go to private academies or do you call them academies here?

**Mayor Simpson.** Let's put it this way. East Baton Rouge Parish—our population is about 65-35 white to black. The school system is just the opposite of that. So I guess you could result from that that, yes, they are. But there's a goodly number of blacks that are also going, because they've had very little growth in this parish school system in the last 10 years.

**Dr. Berry.** But if I hear you right, children who go to school—white children go to schools that are mostly white, be they private—private academies?

**Mayor Simpson.** Oh, I don't think so.

**Dr. Berry.** That's what you just said.

**Mayor Simpson.** No, you said private academies, not that they were mostly white. My children go to a private academy that's about 65-35, so it's not mostly white.

**Dr. Berry.** Sixty-five percent what?

**Mayor Simpson.** White, which mirrors the population.

**Dr. Berry.** And in the public school system, you said the population was the other way around?

**Mayor Simpson.** Right.

**Dr. Berry.** Majority black?

**Mayor Simpson.** Right.

**Dr. Berry.** So in other words, there is a degree of segregation in the public schools in this place? I mean, I'm just asking for information.

**Mayor Simpson.** I agree with you, it's not the way that you think of segregation, but it's right.

**Dr. Berry.** Right, okay. So all right. I just wanted to establish that, because the way it was described at first in your remarks, I thought maybe we had found a place where segregation had been totally—

**Mayor Simpson.** No, I don't—

**Dr. Berry.** —erased.

**Mayor Simpson.** I think this parish has been undergoing this for so long, it's in the forefront right now in front of the Federal district judge, Judge Hymel—I still call you judge—he may want to comment on that, because that's a suit that's involved and they're having status conferences as we speak involving this.

**Dr. Berry.** I don't have any further questions, and if no one else does—yes, Ms. Bourg has a question.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you, Mayor. Do you have any graffiti that might be related to gangs, or do you have any gang activity within the area or rise in Satanism that you may have noticed in the last 5 years?

**Mayor Simpson.** Four years ago I was teaching high school at the school. There was gang activity. A lot of it came from—

**Ms. Bourg.** There was what kind of activity?

**Mayor Simpson.** Gang activity. There was at some point in time the influence of some cult activity. I think you'd have to get with the police to find out exactly what was involved and how serious that was. But from a teaching point we knew whether it was a gang or whether it was a turf battle. We knew there were rival areas and any time we had a problem, it usually involved the two rival areas.

To say this was part of that from the church burnings, I don't think there's been any link to that whatsoever.

**Ms. Bourg.** Well, is there a way that you record the gang activity and the cult activity in a special way?

**Mayor Simpson.** Again, you're asking elected chief of police questions that the mayor does not—

**Ms. Bourg.** Does the chief of police brief the mayor on those categories of—

**Mayor Simpson.** Yes, at times they do, yes. If they call at night and there's a major problem involving something of that nature, yes.

**Ms. Bourg.** So we will have a chance to address these questions to the chief of police later?

**Mayor Simpson.** To my knowledge he wasn't invited to speak.

**Dr. Berry.** So then, how do I ascertain this information?

**Mayor Simpson.** We can try to get him here. He may be able to come tomorrow.

**Ms. Bourg.** I would like to know if there's a way that you record the cult activity and the gang activity in separate categories—

**Mayor Simpson.** He may be able to put that in writing and send that to you.

**Ms. Bourg.** Was the gang activity broken down in any kind of racial—along racial lines or was it targeted—the activity targeted against particular groups?

**Mayor Simpson.** Again, I don't know.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you.

**Dr. Berry.** I want to thank you, Mayor Simpson, for being with us and we really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

**Mayor Simpson.** Thank you. And tomorrow if you need anything, my office is right there. My staff is there. We'll be glad to assist you in any way. Thank you for being with us.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you very much. We now call the Honorable John Womack, who is the mayor of Zachary, Louisiana. Is Mayor Womack here? If he's not, then he's not. We'll see if he comes. I'll move on to the next person, who is the U.S. attorney. Is he actually the U.S. attorney—Mr. Hymel, who is the U.S. attorney, who is in charge of the task force that the Justice Department and the BATF and law enforcement officials have

organized, and he can tell us something about that and tell us how the law enforcement effort is going here.

We very much appreciate you taking time from your busy schedule to come here tonight.

### **Statement of L.J. Hymel, U.S. Attorney, Middle District of Louisiana**

Mr. Hymel. Thank you for the invitation to appear. I'm L.J. Hymel. I'm the United States attorney for the middle district of Louisiana, which includes this community and this parish.

Also with me tonight, and I think you'll hear from the United States attorney in the eastern district of Louisiana, Eddie Jordan—his first assistant, Mr. Jim Letten is here, and Mr. Jordan could not be here himself.

Likewise, the United States attorney from Lafayette, the western district of Louisiana, Mr. Mike Skinner, called me before I left my office, and he was planning on coming here but something came up in his office and he asked me to extend his apologies for not being able to come here and essentially said that what I'm saying, I'm speaking for him also.

I was born and reared in this community in East Baton Rouge Parish in Baton Rouge. As a matter of fact, I spent my high school years here in the Baker community, and as a matter of fact as it turns out, one of the churches that was burned, the St. Paul Free Baptist Church, is two doors down from my aunt's house, where I spent a whole lot of time when I was a young lad growing up here in the Baton Rouge area.

So although I'm here as a Federal representative, I wanted you to know that I am a local person.

All four of the fires in this community occurred on the same morning of February 1, 1996. As I said, all in the early morning hours.

So our assumption is—and we're working on this assumption—is that whatever person did this, or whatever persons did this, they're probably responsible for all four. I don't think it's just a coincidence that we had four church burnings the same morning within hours of each other.

So our assumption is that one person or persons are responsible for the lighting of the fires.

Now, immediately after this occurred—of course, it doesn't take a whole lot of sense to realize that this is a very significant, a very important catastrophe in your community.

Arsons are very difficult crimes to solve. I think the stats put out by ATF is that anywhere from one out of—only one out of three or one out of four fires are actually ever solved, so they are very difficult crimes to solve because of the fact that they are committed in the dark of night. They are crimes committed where the assailant, the defendant, the perpetrator does not have to face his victim or victims.

They are crimes committed by cowards, persons who do not face or do not have to face their victims.

So realizing the importance in solving these crimes and realizing how difficult it is to solve these crimes, we went about putting together a task force immediately to work together, to bring together the best in our community, to resolve this, to solve these crimes and bring to the bar of justice the perpetrators of these crimes.

So we put together a task force that included members or agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. We had the Louisiana State fire marshal involved. We have the Louisiana State Police involved as members of our task force. And, of course, we have the local arson task force, which is composed of members of the local fire departments and local police departments.

And it's this effort, this local, State, and Federal effort that is working together in trying to solve these heinous crimes.

Now, I have attended a number of meetings. Of course, locally I attended Congressman Fields' meeting last week and spoke there, but I have also attended meetings in Washington, D.C., where Mr. Patrick presided and Mr. Johnson from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms presided.

And at a national level they have created a national task force to oversee the investigations that are going on in all the States where fires of this type have occurred. So we have this oversight Federal task force that is working directly with the local task force, such as the one that we've put together in this community. And one of the

purposes of that Federal task force is to make certain that if something is happening in another State that perhaps could impact what we are doing here in our community on the investigation, they advise us of that.

It's kind of an information clearinghouse, so to speak, but in any event, the investigations in any State, any community, are being done, as I understand it, similar to the way that we're doing it here in Baker, Zachary, and East Baton Rouge Parish.

Another thing that I have attempted to point out to the members in our community here, and I think Mr. Patrick and Mr. Johnson have tried to do this on a national level, is to let all of the communities around the country that are suffering these crimes—and those communities that are lucky enough not to be suffering these crimes—let the people know how important the resolution and the solution and the solving of these cases are to law enforcement.

These cases in this community are a number one priority in my office and all of the law enforcement agencies that are working with my office on this task force—and I know you've heard Mr. Patrick and Mr. Johnson say the same thing on a national level.

Again, because every case is not solved or not solved yet, we have concerned citizens out there, and we just want these citizens out there to know that we're doing everything in our power to solve these crimes.

Speaking about local task force, the task force investigators have interviewed almost 600 people at this time. They have gone around to all the gas stations within hours of the fires to ascertain whether or not anyone had been in any of those stations purchasing gas in small quantities in cans and plastic cans and what have you.

We have police officers who are on vacation. They're working on this case without being paid. All of the bad and horrible things that these cases, these crimes represent, it's hard to put them in words, but when you look at the positive—if you can say anything positive comes out of something like this—when you see all of these guys work together to try to find out who did these things, to try to find the person, to arrest the person, to bring that person before the courts, it's just gratifying to

me to see that many guys with so many different areas working together and working so hard in trying to resolve this.

Now, you said a moment ago that you wanted, I assume, myself and the other persons involved in law enforcement to explain to you what we're doing insofar as how we're accepting the responsibility of investigating and solving these crimes.

I hope I've been able to, in words, tell you what we are doing and how we feel about it. I mean, we understand that this is our responsibility. There's nothing I would rather do than to be able to come in here this afternoon and tell you that earlier this morning or earlier this afternoon we arrested the persons who committed these crimes.

I would love nothing better than to tell you that the Federal grand jury just returned indictments against the persons who burned these four churches. But I can't do it yet.

But we're not giving up. These cases may never be solved. I feel that they will be. I hope that they will be, but if they're not solved, it's not going to be because law enforcement did not give it 120 percent effort. It's not going to be because law enforcement didn't work together. It's not going to be because law enforcement didn't consider this a number one priority in the community for this State and for this nation.

So I hope in some way I've been able to explain to you how we in law enforcement feel about these kinds of crimes being committed in our community.

Insofar as answering questions about what we are doing specifically, I'm going to have to punt on that. I just cannot comment about what we're doing on an active, ongoing investigation. But I will try to answer your questions as best I possibly can.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you, Mr. Hymel. Anyone have a question? Yes.

**Mr. Quigley.** This may be a question that you can't answer, but as indicated earlier, we had a meeting in March and we had a representative of the FBI there at that time. It was Agent Richard Chenevert, and he told us at that time, even though they had conducted quite a number of interviews and that, that at that point the investigation had no leads whatsoever.



Is that something that you can comment on, whether that has changed or not, or is that something that you don't feel comfortable talking—

**Mr. Hymel.** I would rather not comment on the status of the investigation. I know Agent Chenevert, he is working on this case. He's a member of the task force. But insofar as where we are, what we have learned, where we're going, what our game plan is, I would really rather not comment upon that.

**Mr. Quigley.** On the more general question about reporting of hate crimes in general, at our hearing in March representatives of these churches indicated to us that this wasn't the first time that they had had problems. They had people throwing mud on churches. They had had graffiti. They had had things knocked over. This was obviously the most significant problem that they had, and the agent with the FBI said that one of the problems that his office faced and the Federal officials faced—he said they relied on the hate crimes issue very heavily on local law enforcement, and that they depend on reporting by local law enforcement, and that's—arson is arson, not necessarily a hate crime to people in local law enforcement—and that there are particular problems in smaller local communities with identifying things as hate crimes, and, as a consequence, the information about a pattern in a community or incidents in a community are not always brought to the attention of the Federal officials.

I'd like you to comment on that, what your experiences are on that and if any of that—if there's any change going on in that as a result of the coordinated activities of the past several months.

**Mr. Hymel.** I think we're learning a lot as we go along. I think what's happened in the past is that what has been termed as hate crimes, what's been termed as vandalism, I think a lot of these things have gone unreported. I think a lot of the churches or schools where you've had graffiti painted on the walls or you've had windows broken, or you've had other acts of vandalism committed, I think that a lot of that has gone unreported, and for that reason I think in some instances it has escalated.

For example, I'm sure you're familiar with the Shiloh Baptist Church here in Baton Rouge, that

about a week ago they found a hangman's noose hanging on the front door of the church. Perhaps a year ago that may have gone unreported. It may—the noose may have been taken down, thrown away, and law enforcement never would have heard about it.

And we've seen—looking back now, we have seen that what has sometimes culminated in the burning down of a church, started weeks or months or perhaps even years previously with lesser crimes, lesser acts of hate, lesser acts of vandalism such as a church might find some graffiti painted on the walls.

It goes unreported. The crime may escalate. Next time there may be a broken window. Again, it goes unreported. And ultimately the ultimate act is the church is burned down.

So what I think we've learned is, and I think the community has learned is that no matter how minor—and again, I don't think any of this is minor, but insofar as actual destruction, physical destruction, no matter how minor, I think the community has now learned that that has to be reported, because this minor act of destruction can lead to more serious acts of destruction culminating in the burning of the church.

So I think both law enforcement and I think the community has learned a lot in the last few months insofar as reporting to law enforcement anything that appears to be out of the ordinary.

**Mr. Quigley.** And one final note on that, and that is, the same FBI agent told us, for example, that there wasn't even a Federal investigation started until a day and a half after the burnings of the four churches because it was never even reported to them, that it wasn't considered at that point—I guess we were still early in the church burning publicity—you know, information campaign, that this was arson, it wasn't necessarily race-based, wasn't necessarily hate crime and the like. And I would imagine that a delay of 36 hours in looking at a crime scene and people having the opportunity to go ahead and do what they need to do in order to distance themselves from the scene, would aggravate the job of your investigators.

**Mr. Hymel.** Certainly the sooner we can get at a crime scene, the better off we are. You've got to

realize that when a police officer, no matter what the crime—when he approaches a scene, he's got to approach that scene with an open mind as to what it might be and what might have caused it, and I guess up until recently I guess most police officers, when they approach a scene such as this, their first inclination is going to be to look to see whether or not it was an accidental fire, see whether or not there was an electrical short or something like that, but I think because of what has happened recently that attitude has now changed.

I think that when a fire is reported now, I think the officers, when they approach a scene now, are going to start off with the presumption that it's an arson, that it's a hate crime, and work back from there.

But I think four on the same—as you said earlier, four on the same night in the same community within the few number of hours is not—that would occur to people fairly quickly I think, and I just think if we have learned anything this year, and that is this—just this year that reporting these things to your office and the task forces around the United States are very, very important in order to give law enforcement a fighting chance to do something about it.

As I've indicated, we've learned a lot in this community since February 1. We've learned a whole lot and we're learning more every day, both from law enforcement and from the community itself.

**Ms. Parks.** Some information on local law enforcement, if you'd share what you can, recognizing as the mayor said, that Baker has a police department, I think Zachary does, Central does, and we also have the sheriff's office. How do those interact or what would have happened? For instance, who would have been called first? Would it be the sheriff or the local—can you just sort of share what you can?

**Mr. Hymel.** I think Butch Browning will be talking to you in a moment. He's a member of the local arson task force, and I think he was actually one of the first persons at least on a couple of the scenes, and he can give you probably some specifics, but any time you have a fire, the local fire department is going to be the first to arrive on the scene, and certainly when they see something out

of the ordinary, that being a church fire, they're going to call in the local police departments to come in and conduct an investigation.

In most instances in this State, it is the locals who come out first, and from the locals, that is from the local fire department, local police department, from there you're going to go to the State fire marshal, who will come out and conduct an investigation.

From there you're probably going to go next to the Louisiana State Police. Their arson people will come out. And generally the—unless and until they see that there is a Federal interest—the possibility of a Federal crime, that's when FBI, ATF are called in.

And as Mr. Quigley said, that probably took about 36 hours in this instance. I don't know that for sure, but I'll accept your figures.

**Ms. Parks.** Thank you.

**Mr. Longoria.** Just as a followup to that, I thought I remembered, and not being from East Baton Rouge Parish, I'm at a loss—maybe Glenda, you remember that someone had voiced some concern initially in March that either because of jurisdictional issues or because one particular church may be outside of the city limits, don't you recall that there was either some reporting issue or a followup issue that might have created an obstacle to expeditious reporting, expeditious followup, because—don't you all remember the East Baton Rouge people, because something about Central as opposed to Zachary as opposed to Baker, who would follow up or who would report, who would come back? Do you recall?

**Ms. Parks.** I don't. That's why I was asking the question.

**Mr. Hymel.** Well, I don't know exactly what happened and I haven't heard what you're referring to. All I can tell you is that once the locals show up at the scene and figure out that something is amiss, when you have a fire, the next phone call is usually to the State fire marshal's office, and at that point at least you have some State coordination and generally that's where you have the Feds come in next, if there's a Federal crime, if there appears to be a Federal interest, such as we have in these cases where you have the obvious is that we have some crimes committed out of hate,

to interfere with persons who are attempting to exercise their rights of religion. That's a Federal crime and that's why my office in this district is the focal point of the investigation.

**Ms. Bourg.** I recall in March that one of the ministers indicated that subsequent to the fire he had been questioned very vigorously and he mentioned that there were some all-terrain type vehicles that had been run off prior to the fire and had been splashing mud on the church and doing vandalism on the property, and I believe, if I'm not incorrectly characterizing the minister's remarks, he indicated that such information was not well-received nor taken seriously.

And I wondered if there is a coordination of information problem, and perhaps a need for additional learning of the law and training, so it would be training, coordination, and the learning of the law. Do you see that as an area that could bring some solution to any future problems? Could you explain perhaps what he encountered there?

**Mr. Hymel.** I think I know about the information you're talking about, and I can assure you and the pastor and the members of that church that that lead was followed and it was pursued. As a matter of fact, it is still not a closed lead.

We have a hot line, a local hot line. We've put up reward monies. The FBI, ATF has put up \$20,000 in reward monies, so any information we get as I've indicated, we consider that a lead and we run them all out.

Insofar as training is concerned, yes, training—you can never have too much training. Even lawyers now are mandated, just as doctors are, to go back to get so much training per year, and I think a lot of the law enforcement agencies are involved in a lot of training.

My office—I have what's called an LECC program, Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, and one of its goals is to put on training seminars for local and State and Federal law enforcement agencies and agents, but I will have to say this about the people working on this task force, in this case in this district, this parish. We've got some of the best in the business.

~~We meet~~—as a matter of fact, we're meeting this coming Thursday. Our task force—of course, not all of the members but some of the representatives

from every law enforcement agency in the task force—we meet about every 10 days to discuss what information has come forward during the interim, to discuss what avenues, what leads, what we should pursue, what theories we should pursue.

We meet about every 10 days to discuss that, and I've got to say that in this district, the middle district of Louisiana, this is the biggest investigation going on right now in this district, bar none. It's probably the biggest investigation that's ever gone on in this district.

I don't know how familiar you are with the gaming investigation that's been going on. This investigation is bigger than that. We've got more manpower, more men committed to this investigation, more resources committed to this investigation.

I wish I had an arrestee to stand before you. I don't yet.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay. Well, the last question I guess we'll ask you is what are the probabilities—if you had to stand up there and answer this question honestly, what are the probabilities that somebody is going to be found who—because I was reading some statistics on the way down here and it says that usually if you don't find a culprit in most kinds of crimes, especially in incidents of this type, within something like 72 hours or a week, that you probably won't find anybody. I know statistics are just statistics, but—

**Mr. Hymel.** I think it's that way in any kind of crime, whether it's a murder, a robbery, a rape, or whatever. The longer the period of time between the commission of the crime and the arrest, that's better for the arrestee, better for the defendant, but it's certainly not good for the government, it's not good for law enforcement.

We need a lucky break. As I've indicated, we are doing everything humanly possible to solve these cases, but we just need that lucky break. We need that little tidbit of information that hopefully is going to come along.

The national statistics on solving arsons, as I indicated a moment ago, depending on who you talk to, it's anywhere from one out of three or one out of four of successful investigations of arson cases.

I'm hoping we're going to be that one.

**Dr. Berry.** The only other point I'd make is that you and all the Federal officials seem to bear the brunt of public notice about how this stuff is going, when in fact isn't it a—isn't it the local and State police responsibility to find people who engage in crimes of arson and other kinds of crimes, and you're only involved because of civil rights violation, but—and how many investigators do you have on this—you're the chair of the task force, I think, isn't that right?

**Mr. Hymel.** I am.

**Dr. Berry.** How many investigators, like real live folk—

**Mr. Hymel.** I'd say we—I don't want to—we've had as many as in excess of 100 investigators working on this case at any one given point in time. I'm not going to tell you we have that many on the streets every day, but we've had that many working nothing but this case quite frequently.

Insofar as local versus Federal, I think most arsons—if this were the—if these were burnings of the local gas station, you wouldn't see the Feds involved, but because it is civil rights, because it's crimes of hate, that's why we're involved. That's why we are the focal point of this investigation.

**Dr. Berry.** And why aren't you out investigating the burnings of white churches? The press keeps asking me that, that's why I'm asking you. I think I know the answer.

**Mr. Hymel.** I think we are. I think we are. Thank God we've had none in this district, but if we did, we'd be investigating them as seriously and as hard as we are these black churches.

**Dr. Berry.** What is it about the burning of black churches that brings the Feds into—have there been allegations—

**Mr. Hymel.** You lived through the sixties, as I did, and that's one of the worst things that I can remember on the nighttime news, is seeing black churches burning in the South, and I don't ever want those days to return.

**Dr. Berry.** Mr. Johnson and Mr. Patrick told me the other day that there haven't been any allegations that the white churches were burned for racial reasons, is that correct?

**Mr. Hymel.** I'm not involved in any of the investigations of the white churches, so if Mr. Patrick and Mr. Johnson said that, I'm—

**Dr. Berry.** You're the U.S. attorney down here, aren't you?

**Mr. Hymel.** We've had—thank God, we've had no burnings of white churches that I'm aware of.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay. Thank you very much. Unless somebody else has one. Oh, just—don't go away, Ms. Bourg has one.

**Ms. Bourg.** I wanted to ask you a question about the kinds of forensics resources you have and forensic support. Could you talk about that a little bit?

**Mr. Hymel.** Very little bit. We have the FBI laboratory in Quantico, Virginia, and we have all of the facilities of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

**Dr. Berry.** All right. Thank you very much, unless somebody else has a question. We really appreciate your coming out and—

**Mr. Hymel.** Thank you.

**Dr. Berry.** —providing us with this information.

**Mr. Hymel.** Thank you. Maybe you'll read in the newspaper in a day or two that we've got our man.

**Dr. Berry.** All right. How do you know it's a man? Ah, he told us it's a man. We now have some information.

**Mr. Hymel.** Man or lady.

**Dr. Berry.** Oh, person.

**Mr. Hymel.** Person. Arsonist.

**Dr. Berry.** Right. I understand that Mr. Letten—is it Mr. Letten who is here? Did you have anything you wanted to add, Mr. Letten?

#### **Statement of Jim Letten, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Mr. Letten.** My name is Jim Letten. I'm the first assistant U.S. attorney in New Orleans. I'm second in command to Mr. Eddie J. Jordan, Jr., who was invited to speak to you.

I can tell you right now that having heard Mr. Hymel for the second week in a row, that—and I want to offer this to you—he is hard to follow, for a couple of reasons.

First of all, I want you all to understand very clearly that Mr. Hymel's task force concept, which he has implemented here, is a model for us in the eastern district and those in the western district, as well as probably a model for most task forces that

are forming right now in this country, that want to look to a successful and aggressive task force concept, in the church burning or the church violence task force arena.

I think another thing that I want you all to know is that, for those of you who don't, Eddie J. Jordan, Jr., my boss, my first in command, my CO, is the first African American U.S. attorney in Louisiana.

I think it is a tremendous understatement to say that he and I, in our office, are collectively dedicated as is Mr. Hymel, as is Mr. Mike Skinner in the western district, to aggressively investigating and prosecuting any type of desecration or fires against any churches, whether they be black, Hispanic, Vietnamese, American, or what have you.

We've been blessed in the eastern district because we have two—I say blessed—we have relatively few incidents. We have two incidents that are being investigated right now. We are going to focus our energies not only to the investigation of those incidents, but also along with Mr. Hymel, and along with the joint task force, in which we share many assets. We're going to focus our energies on prevention, deterrence, and awareness, security awareness.

Last week, Mr. Hymel, in conjunction with the special agent in charge from ATF and also the special agent in charge from FBI, Mr. Stellingworth and Mr. DeSarno, respectively, handed out at the town hall meeting some very, very nicely done and very well-thought-out and very well-presented church threat assessment guides that were produced jointly by ATF and the FBI in order to assist local churches and community groups in preventing and increasing security and preventing church fires and desecration to church property.

We are in the process of not only forming our eastern district task force, but also, as is Mr. Hymel, of using our local assets, our local community connections, in distributing these leaflets, these very nice booklets to the various churches and making ourselves available, U.S. attorney's office personnel as well as Federal and local investigators, to these churches in order to provide forums or whatever type of meetings that they deem appropriate, to advise them as to how to avoid

being victimized by such crimes and criminals, whether they be hate-related or whether they simply be acts of criminality.

So with that, I do want to tell you that as a career prosecutor, we're proud of what Mr. Hymel is doing in this district. We're watching what Baton Rouge and the middle district are doing and we're going to follow suit in the formation of our task force.

Another thing that you all may want to know and will help is that the three districts in this Louisiana, western, middle and eastern, share in essence the same FBI and ATF resources.

The primary field offices for the three task forces all reside in New Orleans with various field offices. Therefore, when I, or Mr. Jordan or Mr. Hymel or Mr. Skinner, speak to Mr. Jim DeSarno, who is the FBI special agent in charge, or Mr. Bob Stellingworth, we're all talking to the same individuals whose personnel will investigate all such offenses.

So I think that you will be able to go back with a sense that we have not only three individual task forces, but three very nice interlocking task forces in which there is going to be a great sense of continuity and a sense of purpose.

**Dr. Berry.** There was one question that I forgot to ask Mr. Hymel and I'll ask you too. It's been reported that some people have complaints about the way the investigators are carrying out their investigation in terms of the kinds of questions they've asked some of the members of the churches and some of the people at the churches, which they took to imply that they somehow had burned the churches themselves.

Are you aware of any of this? Have you heard about any of this, either you or Mr. Hymel, and what's the answer?

**Mr. Letten.** Mr. Hymel may have heard about the specifics. Let me say this generally, if I can, L.J. I'm not aware of specifics. I am aware or have heard that in many such cases, and I'll speak in general terms, members of congregations of churches or members of community groups or whatever, when they have to endure crimes like this, and they are questioned by the authorities, take umbrage at the types of questioning that they have to endure.

I will tell you as a career prosecutor and in defense of the methods of what I think are highly trained and very professional Federal and also State investigators, that the people who are members of the congregations will be questioned thoroughly in order for the investigators to get a complete, accurate, and detailed picture of all facets that might pertain at all to such fires.

It may very well be that the investigators want to eliminate very early on the possibility of either some type of arson for profit or arson for other motives.

You have to remember that we cannot always assume in the case of arsons of churches that hate is necessarily the motive, but rather that it is a potential motive and that's one of the reasons we're going to—we're going to mobilize our resources.

But in order to properly solve these offenses, in order to make sure that we're—when we make an arrest that we're able to follow through with indictments and proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigators have to be extremely thorough, painfully thorough, and I use that term knowingly right now, in that they have to ask very pointed questions of everyone with whom they deal in order sometimes to rule out the possibility of other types of motive other than hate.

On occasion I think you've heard in other districts in this country that such investigations have revealed some such crimes were committed by individuals for profit, either for insurance fraud or whatever.

In some cases you did indeed have motives of hate, but they may have been religion, they may have been racial.

So while turning this over to Mr. Hymel for the specifics, which he may very well not be able to give you because of integrity considerations in the investigations, I will offer to you that one thing we wanted to do at last week's meeting was to ask the congregations, the flocks, the ministers of the congregations, to be patient with the investigators, both State and Federal, because no matter how professional they are, no matter how patient they are, in their thoroughness, they must in fact go through a very, very specific and very tedious line of questions with everyone who is a potential witness in

order to get as much information as possible, and we hope that the people who are being questioned, those potential witnesses, will be patient with us as well and will understand that these questions are not pointed at them specifically, but are simply professionally designed and almost scientifically constructed in order to get to the bottom of these cases.

**Dr. Berry.** Do you have any evidence of anyone in the congregations either for profit or otherwise may have perpetrated the fires that you are investigating?

**Mr. Letten.** Unfortunately I can't answer that question and let me help you out a little bit with this, and I'm not trying to be evasive. We have, as I'm sure most of you know, not only considerations of investigative integrity to worry about, in failing to—or being unable to reveal specifics of leads and investigations to the public or in information available to the public, but we also have very, very strictly constructed and very detailed regulations, guidelines, and policy constraints within the Department of Justice that prevent us in most cases even from confirming the existence of specific investigations.

**Dr. Berry.** I understand that, just to shorten it so that I won't take up all of your time, since we're behind. I understand all of that. I just wanted to know—I wanted to ask you for the record—

**Mr. Letten.** I'm unable to tell you that.

**Dr. Berry.** Okay.

**Mr. Letten.** I'm not at liberty to tell you that.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you very much. Is your answer the same, Mr. Hymel? Is that your answer? That's his answer. He's nodding his head which I take to mean "yes."

I'm going to turn this over to Mr. Quigley, because I have a lot of questions to ask so I'll just listen then and let him go ahead and chair, as he's supposed to do.

I forgot to tell you that there will be a transcript of these proceedings released sometime within the next 30 days after this meeting, as well as a summary of what happened, and then we'll wait to see what the State Advisory Committee does in terms of findings and what they want to do with it, but there will be a transcript available to the public of this meeting.

Let me turn this over now to Mr. Quigley. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Our next person scheduled to speak is Mr. Butch Browning, who is with the East Baton Rouge arson investigation. Mr. Browning?

**Statement of Butch Browning, Director,  
East Baton Rouge Parish Arson Task  
Force**

**Mr. Browning.** Good afternoon. It's certainly a pleasure to be here. First let me introduce myself. My name is Butch Browning. I'm the director of the East Baton Rouge Parish Arson Task Force.

Allow me to give you a little makeup of our team, because it might help understand some of the confusion I've already heard. East Baton Rouge Parish Arson Task Force was organized in 1991. It actually started operation in March of 1991. My full-time job is assistant chief of fire district 6, within East Baton Rouge Parish.

The task force was established because we found that most arsons in East Baton Rouge Parish outside the city limits of Baton Rouge, weren't being identified, weren't even being categorized by the fire department, because of lack of training, lack of knowledge.

Most of the departments at the time were volunteer, didn't have the resources. I mean, just getting those folks out of bed to put the fire out and having them home in enough time to get dressed and go to work was a large enough feat.

So the task force was organized—under State law the State fire marshal can commission local jurisdictions to basically do his job. It's done in Shreveport. It's done in Baton Rouge, it's done in New Orleans, it's done in Jefferson Parish, and we felt that at this point East Baton Rouge Parish was getting to be the same size, that we needed to take on this responsibility ourselves.

So that's what the task force did. It was established under the East Baton Rouge Parish Fire Chiefs Association, which was a neutral group. It was no one fire department organizing it, and we've been very successful.

I personally have been involved in the arson investigation for going on 10 years from my full-

time employment at district 6. I grew up in the Baker, Brownsfield area, just a little footnote.

My service in the fire department started when I was 3 years old. I was severely burned in a fire in Brownsfield. My daddy pulled me out and put me in a bathtub and waited and waited and waited, and finally the Baker Fire Department showed up, which wasn't even in their jurisdiction. At the time Brownsfield didn't even have a fire department.

So after I recovered, and my dad said that we need to do something about this, the Brownsfield Fire Department was then established.

So I guess when it comes to fire, I know what it's all about, and I feel very strongly about a progressive and upbeat and a community-oriented fire department.

When I came on board, and was one of the key people in helping organize the arson task force—I view it as just another one of those progressive steps that we could do on a wide scale.

Currently the task force services 10 fire districts that includes the city of Baker and the city of Zachary.

The funny thing about the arson task force, once again, is it's strictly volunteer. No one receives any contributions for their service on the arson task force. Our annual budget is about \$3,000 a year. All we're paying for is film processing. We have a couple vehicles that we utilize, maintain those vehicles, and a few other office expenses.

To this point in the church fire investigation we have expended \$4,000 over our budget. That money has been collected among all the fire departments in the parish. The fire departments in the parish have generously put more money together to help us with this church fire investigation.

We investigate about 120 arsons a year, and that's been a pretty consistent trend since 1991. So far this year, as of this morning, we have investigated 76 arsons in East Baton Rouge Parish, outside the city limits of Baton Rouge. So our arsons as a whole are on the increase, and that's a whole different story, but I wanted you to understand the commitment and the time that our people put in.

In the church fire investigation, we have about 2,600 manhours put into it to this point. That's out of 12 investigators who volunteer their time. As

Mr. Hymel indicated earlier, we actually had a fellow who was on vacation when the church fires occurred. The next day he came back from vacation from where he was in Hammond, and actually spent the next week and a half of his own time investigating while on vacation from his regular job.

So—and I would be slighting our task force if I did not mention that, because I really appreciate what our people do. They're very dedicated, not only in the church fire efforts, but in everything we do, and the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish and the citizens of this State need to be proud of individuals like this.

We're working very heavily with other agencies with the church fire concept, trying to mitigate this and come to an end.

I want to clear up something, Mr. Quigley. You brought up something about the Federal people not being involved until after 36 hours.

**Mr. Quigley.** That's what they told us in March, yes.

**Mr. Browning.** That's wrong information. In fact, I kind of chronologically put that in order to talk about. So allow me to kind of go through the steps that we followed.

The first church fire on February 1st occurred around 2 o'clock in the morning in Zachary. The investigator on call was dispatched by the Zachary Fire Department, as normally done when they suspect a suspicious fire; they classify the fire to be arson and work the crime scene.

Approximately 4 o'clock in the morning is when the St. Paul Church was reported on fire. I think the Baker police were the first there and the Baker Fire Department followed suit. And then a second investigator was called in to investigate that fire.

By 7 o'clock that morning the investigators involved had met at my office and we had a preliminary meeting. After our meeting we had dispersed to go back to the two churches, because we knew we had a problem. You know, two churches in the same area of the parish, similar type fires. We knew we had a problem.

We were going back to reconstruct the scene in the daylight hours to give us a better perspective, do some preliminary interviews with the church people, and try and understand what was going on.

While doing that, approximately 11:00 a.m. we received a call from the sheriff's office reporting that the Sweethome Baptist Church and the Thomas Benevolent Society, which were side by side on Sunshine Road, had received some fire damage. The fire damage had actually burned itself out. That's why the fire department never was called. Some parishioners had passed that morning and noticed it and called the pastor, and he called the sheriff.

The point is the sheriff's office knows our role in arson, not just—this is well before church fires were prevalent in our area. Any time there's an arson in the parish they notify us because for this exact reason—we may have a trend of fires.

For example, we're working a big trend of automobile fires that are being stolen and burned in the southern part of the parish. So the sheriff's office is very well up on this, and they advise us immediately, because we're putting together facts and information trying to stop that problem, which is a big fraud problem.

We worked that scene at approximately 12:30 that day, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Baton Rouge field office was notified by us that we had four churches that suffered fire damage.

Don't hold me to this, but probably about 4 o'clock that afternoon an agent was actually with us. So the Federal people were involved immediately, and that's not from the mere fact of it's a church fire. It's a procedural thing with us. Any time we have a multiple arsonist running around in one night, we involve the ATF.

They have wonderful resources, which has definitely been involved in the church aspect of it, but just to let you know, they were involved in the beginning and that's false information by—now, we did not call the FBI. That's not who we deal directly with. We deal with ATF, so that might be where the misconception is.

It may have been 36 hours before the FBI was involved, but ATF was—

**Mr. Quigley.** The person who was telling us this was the FBI agent, so perhaps they didn't know about it.

**Mr. Browning.** Yes, perhaps. Insofar as the fire marshal's office's involvement, we're required by State statutes to notify the fire marshal any time



there's a fire loss involving two or more deaths or over \$1 million in damage. This did not meet that criteria, although we do notify the fire marshal's office of our comings and goings. We work very well with them.

We even went so far that day of notifying the law enforcement agencies.

This occurred on a Thursday. Our main concern was collecting information, gathering information, but like Mr. Hymel stated and not getting into too much detail, there's very little evidence on the arson scene. Most evidence is burned away.

We're skilled in collecting that evidence that we can retrieve, but insofar as eyewitnesses—to this day we're still trying to find us eyewitnesses and do that type of work.

Arson—and the way I describe it to people, it's a very gutless crime. It doesn't take a very confident criminal to commit arson to set a fire. It's usually hidden by dark. It's usually in areas that are not well-supervised, as the case with these churches. They're in areas that are not passable by very many people after a certain period at night.

And that's kind of what we see in all of our arsons, what we saw in the church fires. But our main goal at that point was to keep another church from suffering fire damage.

In addition to going around that day checking other churches in the northern part of the parish to make sure there wasn't any other fire damage that hadn't been noticed yet, we immediately instituted a very aggressive surveillance program, and not getting into too much detail about what that's all about, but it was to make sure that we did not have another church burning and to this day we haven't.

So we are very proud of that and, to me, that's a success story to be proud of today, as we've prevented other churches from suffering further. And I'm very proud of what our people have done for that, along with the cooperation of the other agencies.

To this point we're still continuing cooperation. That Monday after the fire we met with the elected officials from Baker and Zachary and the Brownfield area, because that was actually the jurisdiction in which the two churches burned.

We met with the law enforcement officials in those areas and the fire chiefs in those areas to let

them know what the task force was doing. ATF was at that meeting, letting them know that we had already solicited the involvement of ATF, to put them at ease similar to what you are doing now and let them know that we're taking this very seriously and we're doing everything and expending everything we can. We also solicited their help because, obviously, our resources weren't enough to cover such a massive investigation, like they are today.

So we just continued on under the direction of Mr. Hymel and his staff. The cooperation has been tremendous. I spoke of that recently. I have not felt not part of the investigation, nor have I felt that nothing has been done without the involvement and the input of everyone.

Certainly from a local level we are a very important asset, because we know—we know arson but we also know arsons are occurring and we know the people who start arsons in the past. And, of course, the Federal people bring to the table an enormous amount of resources, a lot of technical support that we never have, what was mentioned, a small gasoline station that might have burned. We would not have had the technical resources we've had in this case.

So I really feel good about that. I feel that everything is being done and a lot more things are being done. I just want leave you with the respect of our people and we're committed to solving this, and my philosophy has been all along, that some of the best arsons that we solve have been months down the line when somebody brags about it.

And I can't wait for that to happen, and we have put enough information out, the rewards. We've developed so many informants, that when that happens, we're going to find out and, if there's anything that you all can do, put that word out, that citizens—just as it's our responsibility to investigate crimes, it's the citizens' responsibility, no matter how fearful they are, how much they may not feel they're involved in it, any bit of information they hear, it's important that it gets funneled to the law enforcement agencies, whether it's in Louisiana fires or any other State's problems. I think that's the most important thing.

Arson is a community problem. It takes communities to solve it. And I just want to leave you with

that. I'll answer any questions. I'm restricted by some of the same things that some of the folks before me have been with, but I'll be glad to answer anything I can.

**Mr. Quigley.** Two just clarification questions. You said the 76 arsons so far this year. Does your group catalog arsons, any of them as particularly like hate crimes or race-based crimes at all?

**Mr. Browning.** Well, yes, we do, and I think your next question is how many of them have been hate crimes. None of them. And we're not classifying the church fire as a hate crime at this point, because there's been no evidence, there's been no—someone mentioned graffiti, threats, or people taking credit for it. There's been none of that.

So, you know, my philosophy is that when we find the folks responsible, one of the things we're going to drill them on is why you did it, and certainly if it's because of a hate crime, then it will be documented so be it, but it would be premature and it would be irresponsible for me to say that it is a hate crime, when in fact it may not be, you know.

We have many fires at night that turn up mysteriously, you know. If you read and if you look at arson, you'll see that juvenile fire setters, these teenagers that are setting fires, it's on the rise, and we're certainly feeling it in Baton Rouge.

**Mr. Quigley.** One other question, as a person who has obviously dedicated a significant portion of your life to dealing with these kinds of issues, it looks like the response of this community has been substantial.

What advice would you give say in St. Landry Parish or Lake Charles or other places that haven't had this yet and hopefully never would have it, about how to be—what kind of vigilance would you suggest to them? What are the kinds of advice that you would give them for prevention or if something happens, what they should do?

**Mr. Browning.** You know, that's interesting, because crime is a problem everywhere and we hear about community involvement, and I think that's what it's all about. I think it's about the community involvement.

Insofar as the fire service in the more rural areas you get to, you're not going to see an already established arson task force. You're going to see a

State fire marshal's office coming in from maybe three parishes over to do preliminary work.

You're going to see sheriff's office or local law enforcement type folks doing it. So that may be the first step is in your community involvement, establish an arson task force.

You've got to remember, the other two functions of our arson task force, although it's not as time-consuming is, first, public education. We take advantage of any moment to get on a television set, to speak in front of groups, to talk about arson, to talk about what fraud does to the insurance—people who pay insurance, to talk about what mischievous arsons do to lives and property, and also we train fire fighters in determining cause and origin and how to preserve our evidence.

Many times it's thrown out the window when we get there, which has been our experience in the past years, because firefighters themselves don't appreciate the importance of a crime scene when they're trying to put a fire out.

So I think the first thing I would promote is community involvement, and the second thing is the formation of some type of an oversight task force, and you mentioned St. Landry Parish. They're actually starting an arson task force right now. I'm going to a meeting next week to meet with some folks over there who contacted us.

So perhaps another positive thing out of this tragedy is maybe people are being more aware and taking to the forefront—and just the mere existence of an arson task force deters a lot of potential arsonists. It didn't do it in this case, but I can tell you it deters—people think twice about setting a fire if they know it's going to be properly investigated.

**Mr. Quigley.** Dr. Hicks.

**Ms. Hicks.** When you talked about the churches, you indicated that you had not labeled those as hate crimes. Would you label those as vandalism?

**Mr. Browning.** I wouldn't label it as that either. Those are all—certainly the hate crimes, the vandalisms, are the possible motives, but I wouldn't want—and that's one thing I learned in law enforcement, you don't commit yourself to one thing, because you can be sadly mistaken.

So I wouldn't—it's certainly vandalism. There's no doubt about that. And what—there's a lot of

things I could say that probably would make you understand it, but I think that might be overstepping the confidentiality we're trying to keep in the case right now.

**Ms. Hicks.** Okay.

**Mr. Browning.** But understand that all those motives are open right now.

**Ms. Hicks.** I was aware of that, but I was just wondering—so how would you categorize it? What general is there of category that is general enough to capture that one?

**Mr. Browning.** Well, there's not one. The motives—the basic motives that we deal with are pretty specific, fraud, the motives of hate crime or a lot of times we may call it a civil disorder, is how it used to be called.

The motives of the vandalism. We also have the juvenile motive. We have the malicious type acts. There are several different motives and it's really—it wouldn't be wise to say this is what it is, although a lot of people perceive it to be a hate crime, and I'm not saying they're wrong. I'm just saying that we've received no evidence at this point to say that's what it was.

And I think the biggest piece of evidence is still walking the streets right now.

**Ms. Hicks.** I have a followup question. You kept saying that you don't think it's a hate crime, or until you have evidence, but until you have evidence otherwise, wouldn't it be wise for you to consider hate crime as a possible motive, because that triggers automatic additional person power from the FBI and other folks that help you expedite the investigation?

**Mr. Browning.** Well, obviously the possibility of it being a hate crime has already been established. That's why you—the resources right now are here, unlimited resources.

We can have probably more investigators in the population of Baker if we asked for it, because the resources are here like it's a hate crime, but I want to be very careful not saying that I believe it's a hate crime because at this point I can't fully say that. I can say that it's a possibility but it's nothing that we can confirm until we find the folks responsible.

And there were no obvious things done that would have said, "Yes, it's a hate crime." If those

things would have been done, my attitude might be differently.

**Mr. Quigley.** And that's the attitude that you have, that there haven't been any other hate crimes as far as you know, right?

**Mr. Browning.** As far as we know there haven't been any and I hope that's credited as far as not being more church fires; I hope that's credited to the aggressive work that's been done by all members of the task force.

**Dr. Berry.** Were there any other churches anywhere near these churches that were burned?

**Mr. Browning.** Well, these churches were all pretty much in the same general locale as far as Baker-Zachary.

**Dr. Berry.** Are there any white churches in the area?

**Mr. Browning.** No, and that was brought up earlier. To my knowledge the arson task force in the parish has not investigated any white churches, any fire losses in any white churches that were an arson, and I don't believe—

**Dr. Berry.** Mr. Browning, that was not my question. My question is are there any white churches in the general locale where these black churches that were burned are?

**Mr. Browning.** Oh, yes, ma'am.

**Dr. Berry.** Were any of them burned?

**Mr. Browning.** No, ma'am.

**Dr. Berry.** Do you have—does that mere fact create any at least suspicion in your mind that there may possibly have been some connection? You know you can't say whether it was a hate crime, not a hate crime, and I don't know, for gosh sake, but the fact that they did—whoever did it, burned these particular churches, doesn't that at least give you enough information to at least consider that it may possibly have been—had something to do with the fact that they were black churches?

**Mr. Browning.** That consideration has been done and is in the process, sure.

**Dr. Berry.** You agree with that?

**Mr. Browning.** Sure, I agree with that.

**Dr. Berry.** You agree?

**Mr. Browning.** I agree with that, but what I'm not saying is that it is a hate crime.

**Dr. Berry.** I understand that.

**Mr. Browning.** And when we find out it is, I'll certainly say it. We investigate fires that go on for weeks before we even say it's arson, because we may have to wait on forensic and other type of information to come.

But I think that kind of answered your question.

**Dr. Berry.** Thank you.

**Mr. Browning.** Okay.

**Mr. Quigley.** We'd ask now John Engelsman, representative from the U.S. attorney's Office. I'm sorry, I jumped ahead. You have one person first, sir, sorry. Reverend James Larry Freeman from the Sweethome Baptist Church. Is Reverend Freeman here?

**Statement of James Larry Freeman,  
Pastor, Sweethome Baptist Church,  
Baker, Louisiana**

**Rev. Freeman.** Good afternoon. I'd like to give my obedience to the law of God for allowing me to be here this afternoon with you all.

First I'd like to say—

**Mr. Quigley.** Reverend Freeman, can I ask you to pull that mike down a little bit, because we can't really hear you and I think everybody wants to hear what you have to say.

**Rev. Freeman.** Okay. I'd like to say that on February 1, 1996, the Sweethome Baptist Church was, in fact, burned, with a great effect upon the members of the church. I, myself, am a lifetime member of that church.

We have been wondering and wondering who could do something like this, although the church has been burned before. But now we are at the age where the advertising of hate is throughout the world or throughout the United States, here in this community. I'm from this community.

And we have been taught a certain way in this community. A violation of civil rights, that's a common thing here. It's ignored, but we go along with it for the sake of the younger generation.

We can't go and teach our kids to judge people who burned the churches. We are just—let God handle it. I heard someone speak the other day to say why all of a sudden church burning is a big issue. In my opinion church burning always has been a big issue.

Pastor Connor related to the committee a while back that no one can really love a church who would burn it. You have to hate it. You're not going to get anything out of burning a church.

But it's where we go for salvation, where we go for learning. It's the only place we have when the rest of the world rejects us. So we would like to know in our community, of the organizations, who is in here now helping to rebuild and restore, to help educate the communities as to how to go on with the future, what type teaching are they going to be teaching.

Our politicians want to sign into law for everyone to carry a gun, kill each other. What are you carrying a gun for? The average person doesn't know who the enemy is. Could be living next door.

We don't know who burned the church. Could be someone next door. Could be anybody. But we can't worry about that. But we have to worry about putting off our neckties, putting on our old clothes, and get out there in the community and show the community that we're children from God and no matter what, they burn it down, we're going to put it back up again. They burn it down again, we're going to put it back up, and each time they burn it, we're going to give them more help, because more people are going to stand up.

But we've got to also remember that these people, or whoever burned the church, they have to have some type of salvation for them. We're making laws where we want to prosecute them to the fullest, but even in this country we've got to make it where a person with a sick mind at least has a chance to tell his story, and so we've got to keep the doors open for these people to volunteer and come in and get some type of help without judging them.

That's what I have to say to this Committee.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much, Reverend. Could you answer a few questions for us?

**Rev. Freeman.** Yes, I surely can.

**Mr. Quigley.** I have a couple, but other people want to say something first?

**Ms. Hicks.** What kind of tensions have been created as a result—among your parishioners—have been created as a result of the burning or have there been any?

**Rev. Freeman.** Among who?

**Ms. Hicks.** Tensions, have any tensions been created among the membership as a result that you could relate to the burnings?

**Rev. Freeman.** Well, there's fear. I mean, anything can happen while you're in there as far as night services. Some of the congregation just won't have them because of it, the fear that they have for what can happen.

Like I say, we have to remember that people have bombed churches while people were inside, and we've been fortunate here that no one has been hurt, and that's our first concern, no one gets hurt, because we can rebuild a church.

**Ms. Hicks.** Reverend, we're concerned about the kind of atmosphere that exists that might give rise to this kind of activity. You mentioned, unless I misunderstood you, that the violation of civil rights is a common thing here.

**Rev. Freeman.** Oh, yes. Well, you have to be from Louisiana to understand that statement. On work force, we're being treated differently. In public office we're being treated differently. For the office for Representative Fields was dismantled due to mostly racial issues. It wasn't anything about the best man for the job, because the people elected him there.

**Mr. Quigley.** Did I hear you say that the church had been burned before?

**Rev. Freeman.** Yes, it was burned before.

**Mr. Quigley.** When was that?

**Rev. Freeman.** It was in the late seventies or early eighties.

**Mr. Quigley.** And what happened that time?

**Rev. Freeman.** Well, my understanding is that it burned completely down on one other occasion and had to be rebuilt completely.

**Mr. Quigley.** Did they ever figure out what caused that fire?

**Rev. Freeman.** Like I say, during the investigation they had back—I think it was March, the local law enforcement agency has no knowledge of it. It was reported but they had no knowledge of it.

**Mr. Longoria.** This question sounds off the wall, but it really isn't. It's related. Did you all have any problems in terms of insurance claims afterwards if you did make an insurance claim? Has there been any problem—I don't know if you noticed

this morning there was an article in the paper about a lot of black churches have had problems with the insurance claims or have been dropped from policies after they recovered for their liabilities. Do you know of any problems that your church may have had with reference to that?

**Rev. Freeman.** For now, we haven't had any problem with the insurance. They have compensated us for the damage that they recorded. I'd like to make a point that I didn't read that article that you read, but a month ago in Atlanta, Brother Earl Jackson set up a hot line for people who had trouble with that problem with the insurance, because it was brought to the attention at that time that a lot of the congregation had trouble having their insurance reinstated.

**Mr. Longoria.** But you haven't experienced that?

**Rev. Freeman.** No, we haven't.

**Mr. Longoria.** Good. Thank you.

**Ms. Madden.** Reverend, how would you describe the response of white people in your area after the burning? Did they rally to support the members of your congregation or was there an indifference? Just how would you describe it?

**Rev. Freeman.** Oh, that's a hard one. The local officials have come out, offered their condolence, their help. We've had reverends and pastors from all around the world sending condolences.

But one thing I would like to—the question really is the local community, so much as the local pastors. I would like to see more of the local pastors come out and support the law enforcement agencies in trying to catch the people who are doing this, but we're going to need support from all the people, not just some come here, some come there, but all the people that come out together and to talk about this issue.

And the only way we're going to solve it is to talk about it.

**Dr. Berry.** Could I ask you a couple questions, please? Reverend Freeman, at these forums you've been to—this is not the first one. Cleo Fields had one and so on. You've been to a number of them.

How many would you say—how responsive has the local white community been to coming out to the other forums that took place?

**Rev. Freeman.** Like I say, it's mixed feelings. We have them on the other side of town, is mostly predominantly black, and we have them on this side, they're predominantly white.

I'd like to see them come out no matter what part of town we're having them at, just everybody come out who wish to participate.

**Dr. Berry.** Are you saying that there are predominantly white and predominantly black neighborhoods in this community? Did I hear you right?

**Rev. Freeman.** You have to look at it—there are predominantly white and black neighborhoods in every community I've ever been in.

**Dr. Berry.** I know. I just wondered if it was in this community too.

**Rev. Freeman.** As far as Baker. Well, okay, we have to look at—our congregation is not located in the city of Baker. See, our geographic location is more or less Scotlandville, which is a predominantly black neighborhood, and Central, which is predominantly a mixed neighborhood.

**Dr. Berry.** Right. Right. The other thing is how would you describe race relations among the races in this community in general?

**Rev. Freeman.** There is none.

**Dr. Berry.** There's none?

**Rev. Freeman.** There is none.

**Dr. Berry.** None? None?

**Rev. Freeman.** There is none. I haven't seen it yet where the black leaders and the white leaders sit down and discuss the problems in the communities. I haven't seen it since I've been here.

**Dr. Berry.** Well, the church fires have occasioned—and we're going to hear from Judge Engelsman in a minute, have occasioned, as you said, people coming from outside the community, sending money, donating money, some white people in the community organizing and mobilizing to—in the name of church desecration.

**Rev. Freeman.** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Berry.** But to the extent that the church fires have caused blacks and whites to sit down together and discuss race problems in this community, you're saying that isn't really what has happened?

**Rev. Freeman.** It's a start to what's about to come, what I'm getting at. We have to sit down now and air out our problems of differences now, because it has gotten to a point in this community

where they're burning churches, and if we don't sit down now and come with some type of solution to these problems, where we headed?

**Dr. Berry.** Mm-hmm. Okay. Well, thank you very much for your—I'm not in charge.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Next we'll hear from Judge John Engelsman.

### **Statement of John Engelsman, Judge, Baker, Louisiana**

**Mr. Engelsman.** Thank you, Mr. Quigley, members of the Commission. It was my privilege last Sunday to attend a rededication service up in Zachary at Cypress Grove Baptist Church. I'm pleased to tell you that that church has been completely rebuilt, refurbished, and going better than ever. Their pride and spirit is very strong up in Zachary.

That was the church that was most seriously damaged.

A couple of the members of the Commission made observations about previous incidents involving three-wheelers, four-wheelers, mud slinging, that sort of thing. I think from recollecting that March meeting, that was primarily from Cypress Grove Church.

I would urge Commission members to keep an open mind about those incidents. That church is located immediately adjacent to the Comite River at a bridge site, where, for many years, in the summer especially, young people go down to the river to the beaches. They ride three-wheelers, four-wheelers, drink.

I think that most of those incidents can be determined by virtue of where that church is located, that if there was a white church located in that site, a home or a business, that they would also be suffering from incidents of people doing wheelies out in the parking lot and slinging mud on the churches. I don't think those are necessarily racial in origin, but rather due to the location of the church.

When the fires occurred, a number of us got together shortly thereafter in Baker and had a meeting and we issued a request for donations. I'm pleased to state that we have received a little under \$12,000 so far and we're distributing on an equal basis to the churches.

We also—the mayor was personally involved from the outset. He got some materials donated for St. Paul's Church and they had redone the damage to their sanctuary very quickly, within a week or two.

Some of the other churches have been delayed by insurance considerations, other considerations.

We've also had offered help in terms of able-bodied craftsmen to help with these churches. First United Methodist Church, for example, in Baton Rouge offered a team of people to help the churches.

But what we have not been as a group to dictate or try to dictate to these churches what we should as neighbors and friends and helpers, do to help them—offered ourselves and our resources to them there, have called upon us and are free to call upon us in the future.

I think several of the churches and their insurance agents preferred that they use professional contractors and professional craftsmen to do the work that needed to be done to the church.

I've lived in Baker since 1973. It's always been a good place to live, a good place to work, a good place to raise your family. It's a good home for people of all races.

As the mayor said, our facilities are integrated; our housing is integrated. I'm someone who, every 6 years in a political campaign, has to knock on every door in town. Our neighborhoods are integrated. Our schools are integrated. Our civic organizations are integrated.

We have a very, successful youth recreation program. Little league baseball is going on as we speak. I believe there's an all star tournament in Baker, all integrated and all occurring very peacefully and civilly.

There are literally thousands of interactions going on between the races every day in this town in a peaceful and harmonious fashion, and I would hope the Commission would not allow itself to be overwhelmed by this one set of incidents that occurred February the 1st of this year, not that they weren't very serious.

We don't know who set these fires. My wife and I went out to eat the other day and there on the door of the restaurant was a reward, \$26,000,

offered for information pertaining to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of these fires.

At the outset I thought it was probably local kids, got drunk, maybe on a dare, but most of the local troublemakers I know would turn their mother in for a \$1,000, much less \$26,000, so we don't know who caused these crimes and I think it's premature to judge this community just because the fires occurred here, the same way that a town wouldn't be condemned because Bonnie and Clyde stopped there to commit a bank robbery.

The fires are repugnant to 99 and 99/100 percent of the people of Baker and we hope that the perpetrators are caught. We're not a town of hate. We're not a burning caldron of racial tension.

I beg to disagree with Reverend Freeman. I think the races do interact to a great extent in this town and do it in a very civil fashion.

I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Mr. Quigley.** I'm speaking only for myself, Judge. I don't think that the Commission is here to accuse Baker or Zachary of being a place that fans any particular brand of racial hatred or is some sort of caldron or laboratory for racists or arsonists and that.

But at the same time I think though—I haven't spent a lot of time in the town. I spent a little bit of time this afternoon, and Baker looks a little bit like a lot of the small towns across the State. The effects of decades of racial—official racial discrimination in this country and in this State are in effect in Baker, the same as they are in most places across the State.

I mean, the black neighborhoods don't have the same sort of streets, drainage, sidewalks, houses, and everything else as some of the more affluent white neighborhoods.

**Judge Engelsman.** Did you go to Parkwood Terrace?

**Mr. Quigley.** I don't know the names of all the places. I just looked at—

**Judge Engelsman.** You didn't go to Parkwood Terrace. It's the finest subdivision in town and it's a black subdivision.

**Mr. Quigley.** I understand, and I think that's certainly true, but are you—you know your town. You're not going to say that there aren't racial

disparities in this town, and that's all we're saying in terms of asking the questions. We're not accusing this town of being worse than any other town, St. Landry Parish, or North Louisiana, or New Orleans or—we have problems everywhere.

But this is not the all-American town that's too busy to hate, that doesn't have racial problems, that stands alone in this State or any other place.

**Judge Engelsman.** No.

**Mr. Quigley.** That's our point.

**Judge Engelsman.** No.

**Mr. Quigley.** Okay. That's all I wanted to ask a question—

**Ms. Bourg.** Dr. Berry said that one of the things we were going to pursue was how people feel about what has been done, and it seems just from my perspective listening to what I've heard so far this evening that there really are two different conclusions on race relations in the area.

From the white community it seems to be a general conclusion that it's fine. From the black community there seems to be a general conclusion that it doesn't even exist. How do you feel about such a disparity in perspectives, and what might be done in a community where two communities have such a different perspective on how relations exist?

**Judge Engelsman.** I think Mr. Quigley touched on the heart of the matter when he said that most of us my age and a little younger and older are products of a segregated society and these things take generations to heal, the hates and angers and tensions and problems take generations to heal, but I think that having the kind of open housing in the community, you get people who are neighbors, and they get to know each other.

So I think gradually over the years the people of good will who want to get along with their neighbors of other races will be able to do so.

One of the things that bothered me the most about the fires was the possibility of this small, small group of hooligans setting the tone for race relations in a community where many hundreds and thousands of people of good will have been trying to get along with each other, and all of a sudden one set of incidents like this, and you have so many problems and tensions that occur as a result of it.

But I think it's just a matter of each of us to look within our own hearts and try to recognize each other as human beings, same species, and try to get along. This country has many problems, but name another country in the world that has this kind of an ethnic and racial melting pot that gets along as well as the United States does.

There are many countries in Europe and all with teensy minority populations that have many, many racial problems and ethnic problems. For example, in Germany the Turks—there have been some incidents where people of Turkish origin were burned out of their homes, and the Turks just are a teensy minority in Germany.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you, Judge.

**Ms. Lee.** I just have one more question. It's like a glass half empty or half full, is how you look at it. In San Francisco we went through the same problem with different community groups who didn't understand each other, who did not know how to communicate with each other.

What happened was the city's leadership took the initiative, whether it's the mayor, the board of supervisors, they called the groups together and had a roundtable and people started sitting down to talk to each other, to listen to each other. So if I think everything is fine, but the other side thinks that things are not going well, then we have to sit down and talk about it.

Has this city conducted any kind of meetings or get-together at all that the city invites the black leadership or anyone else, at least sit down and just hear the concerns even before the church burnings? Has there been any kind of an attempt to have different groups sit down together?

**Judge Engelsman.** I don't know about a specific organized meeting like that. I know the mayor has an open-door policy. Any citizen, white, black, or whatever color he or she may be is welcome to come to the mayor's office or come to a city council meeting for that matter and address their concerns, but I think you have a point that there's a lot more that can be done.

In the religion section in Saturday's paper there was a story on something that a number of churches I think have now started, a kind of predominantly white church, black church partnership, where the two congregations get together several



times a year, and that may be something that would work well in Baker and help people get together better.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much, Judge. We really appreciate—this is the second time you’ve come and helped us understand what’s going on, and we appreciate you.

**Judge Engelsman.** Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Reverend Briscoe Pierre, Pastor of the St. Paul Free Baptist Church, Baker. Anybody?

How about Reverend Moses Thomas from the Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society in Zachary?

**Statement of Moses Thomas, Jr., Vice President, Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society, Zachary, Louisiana**

**Mr. Thomas.** My name is Moses Thomas, Jr., and I see on this program here it says Reverend Thomas. I’m not a minister.

**Mr. Quigley.** Okay.

**Mr. Thomas.** I don’t know how it got on there. But I am the vice president of the Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society.

And I thought and thought about this situation, and I want to make a brief remark and I’ll be through. And I meditated on what Jesus said, when he was teaching his disciples, teaching them and giving them the Commandments.

He said to them to love one another, as I love you. So if we have the love of Jesus in our heart, we won’t have any room for any hatred and strife—I said these same words Sunday before last. I was in Washington, D.C., when they called on me, and you talk about applause, they gave me applause.

One of the members of the House said that’s it, when they got through they gave me another one, and it’s a true fact, and I stand on that. Jesus wanted us to love one another, and if we have that kind of love, I don’t think we have a problem. That’s all I have to say.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you.

**Mr. Thomas.** Now, I guess the reason they called me Reverend Thomas—when this happened there was a lady called me one night. Yes, I got up—told me Reverend O’Connor had gone to Sweethome and she told me what happened.

I said, “Well, I’m going too,” just like that. So when I got there, there wasn’t anybody there. I went down the street to Doke Wright’s house and I got him, came back and said, “Doke, this here needs to be reported.”

I said first thing we do, we go to Reverend O’Connor’s office and see if he has reported it. We got there, Reverend O’Connor said, “No, I haven’t reported it.” I said you have to report it, because I got your telephone number from here—I got Scotlandville telephone number in my pocket now.

And so we called and the lady said about 30 minutes we’ll be there. Was anybody going to be there? I said tell her, “Yeah, I’ll be here.” So when the gentleman came, he got his little walkie—his telephone there, he called—all say—come a far way, come—and that church was full of people. Sit down and talk—a few days after that they had me up there in Zachary to the fire station, interviewed me up there.

It wasn’t too long ago I was down in Baton Rouge to Cleo Fields’ office, and the FBI been to my house about three or four different times, and they told me, said, “Now, I want you to get every member of Thomas Chapel”—had the secretary to write them—and I turned that over to them.

So I guess that’s how the Rev come in there, but I’m not a minister, but I tell you one thing, I stay close to the minister. I’m the chairman of the deacon board at my church, Beech Grove Baptist Church.

So I thought I’d make my statement pretty quick, so that’s all I have to say.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Thomas.** Hail the Lord, Jesus—I thank you all very much.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Our agenda shows a break but I know we have two other people that have waiting and we’re running an hour behind. I’d like to go ahead if it’s okay with everybody and ask them to go ahead and so if we could have Deacon Lee Douglas of the Cypress Grove Baptist Church. Is Deacon Douglas still here? How about Reverend Ted Roelings of the Baker Ministerial Association?

**Statement of Ted Roelings, Baker  
Ministerial Association, Baker, Louisiana**

Rev. Roelings. I'm Ted Roelings of the Baker Ministerial Association. Our chairman, Reverend Ed Dillworth, is out of town on vacation.

I grew up in the midst of racial discrimination, or ethnic discrimination, as a German American in New Orleans in a community called Saxonhauser, belonging to what was then known as the Second German Presbyterian Church, which had to be changed to the Claibourne Avenue Presbyterian Church because the church was fire bombed.

At the time of the Second World War we received threats that were unbelievable, not just because we were German but also because we had taken in a Japanese American family that had moved to New Orleans to escape internment on the West Coast.

My family, my parents, my grandparents, my mother, and father vowed that their children would never be racist, would never discriminate, and we were brought up in that sort of atmosphere.

In serving the church, that has been the attitude that I have tried to bring in the people of the community in the Baker area, and the ministerial association has tried to perpetuate.

We have the names of all of the ministers of the community on our list, and every time we have had a meeting, every person on that list has been sent a card. Many do not work in the community on a regular basis or live in the community. Therefore, at times it's difficult to contact them, but cards are sent to all people who are ministers in the Baker area.

We have met in interracial meetings in our Baker Ministerial Association. It has been my privilege to kneel and have Bobby Simpson's minister lay his hands on me in prayer for healing, because you can notice I have a bone disease and I have one leg shorter than the other, and have had ongoing problems with staph infections, and it was an honor to have that man lay his hands on me and have prayer for me.

That's the kind of relationship that the black ministers and the white ministers of this community have had who have taken the opportunity to work together.

My wife is also a minister and in the past she and I have reached out and served a black church in the community that was in need in Scotlandville, the first Presbyterian Church of Scotlandville.

Elder McHuff, one of the elders of that church, is here with us tonight. It was at a time of great distress in the life of that church that Mr. Gus Williams, who lives in Baker and attends the Scotlandville First Presbyterian Church, called on me and another white minister who had befriended him through the years and served with him in church work, to conduct the funeral of a son who was murdered in Chicago in a racially motivated fight, not between white and black, but between Hispanic and black.

And I think you will find, as you look at this community, that from the early days of the sixties when I first came to Baker until this day, this is a model of Americana because it has been a growing experience of understanding and of toleration and of acceptance.

In 1968 I left my employment in the motor freight industry and also agriculture and went to work for OEO and the CAP agency, which was then known as Community Advancement, and I was employed as director of rural development in the north end of East Baton Rouge Parish with an office in Zachary.

And I've seen the development of racial relationships in this community from animosity to toleration, to acceptance, to a time of working together and still in all of this, an attitude of questioning who we are and what we're about and where we still have to go.

Those of us in the white community, if we have to divide it that way, and in the black community whom I have worked with, are aware of the fact that we have not arrived, that we have growth that still needs to take place, but we are honest with each other in the questions that we raise and the issues that we deal with.

The official consideration of the Baker Ministerial Association is that the burnings of churches, black or white, is an abomination to humanity. It's something that we will not tolerate in our attitudes. It's something that we have reached out and tried to work to overcome.

The reason I was not at the other meeting, which was conducted last week across town, was because it was at 4 o'clock in the afternoon that I received the invitation to attend that meeting on Monday night. My schedule is such that I cannot change it and meet a meeting that night when I'm invited at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Ms. Robinson had the decency, the respect to call me earlier, was not able to reach me, left a message with a person in my office, called again, and then in order that I could be prepared for this meeting, respectfully faxed me as much information as she could possibly fax me so that I could participate in this meeting and be informed on what was taking place at this particular gathering of people.

When informed in advance, we will attend meetings and we will participate and we will give our full attention to whatever is taking place in our community, because we are concerned about the people of this community, both black and white.

There has been a white church bombed in this community, fire bombed, not recently, but in 1969 the First Presbyterian Church of Zachary was fire bombed on a Monday night.

The response was quick from the fire department. Shortly after the fire bombing both black and white people of the Zachary community worked together to clean that church, to restore it.

That was in the height of the times when people were questioning what racial relationships were all about and what could be done and what should be done and what would be done, and it was done.

And so I stand before you to say there are race relationships. They're still emerging. They will continue to emerge. They are no different in Baker than they are in any of the communities of the north or west or the east.

We are Baker. We love our community. We love our people, black and white, and we're ready to work together. I'll entertain any questions you have.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Any members of the Committee?

**Ms. Hicks.** What's the most significant thing that comes to mind since the burning of those churches that promoted the idea that you've just mentioned, of bringing the groups of people closer together?

What's the most significant thing that you can think of?

**Rev. Roelings.** I believe that both white and black believe that the church is a sacred organization, that nothing should interfere with the churches' operations or the ongoing foundation of the church.

One of the most conservative members of my congregation said to me after it was over—and he is as close to being a bigot as I can think—said I cannot understand how anybody would touch any property that is the property of God.

And I think it crosses the racial line when it comes to church and the concern for what the church can do in the community and does do in the community.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much. Appreciate your coming out this evening.

That's going to conclude our evening session of the community forum. We have a session that starts at 9 o'clock tomorrow, and we will start at 9 o'clock and it concludes no later than 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

We have representatives from congressional districts, Governors' offices, sheriff's department. We have an open session now, but apparently no one has signed up to make any comment at this point.

**Dr. Berry.** Since I will not be here tomorrow, I would like to make a few—I was invited to give a few remarks by way of closing, and I'll do that unless somebody else has some remarks.

**Mr. Quigley.** Just in case somebody wants to say something who didn't get a chance to sign up, if anybody would like to, who is not a participant, say anything for a minute or so—if anyone would like to say something, we'd like to make that offer to you. If not, we'll ask our chair, Mary Frances Berry, to conclude for us. Anyone want to say anything?

We certainly appreciate your being here tonight, both the people who spoke and the people who, like most of us, tried to listen. So we'll ask our chair to conclude.

**Dr. Berry.** I think one of the most interesting things I've found—I knew a great deal about this community before I came here, but one of the most interesting things has been reinforced here—is the

notion that since it's churches that were burned, you can get people to respond to an attack on the church or religion, even if they don't respond to complaints about race relations or they have disagreements about how good or how bad they are, or questions like that.

And I think a lot of the information about the social context here may have to come out in information collected by staff on the demographics, on things such as what is really happening with school desegregation, what is really happening with population and segregation of neighborhoods.

It is heartwarming in the first instance to have people come out like Judge Engelsman and Reverend Roelings from the ministerial association and to see what the response has been on the part of people of faith and people of good will and the community.

But I'm wondering also if the only way we will get anybody to really address the issue of race in this community and religion in the sense that Reverend Thomas, who says he's not a reverend—that Mr. Thomas talked about when he said Jesus said love one another is, once the culprits are found, if they are found, and I would hope they would be, and if somehow someone felt that there was some racial motivation, maybe that would spur people to sit down and try to align their views on race and to try to get on with the business of resolving some of those problems.

I think the response is heartwarming from the community and I think we ask you some—or some of the people did ask you, Judge Engelsman, some rather rough questions, but that only happened because you're here, you see, and because you're trying to do good.

If you hadn't been here, no one would have asked you any questions, so being the exceptional man and the man who is trying to do good, you've got to ask some tough questions, but I appreciate very much what you're doing and I'm sure that everybody else does, and I look forward to hearing more about what takes place tomorrow and my colleague, Commissioner Lee, will be with you all day tomorrow, and I will read the transcript with great interest, and thanks to the State Advisory Committee.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you all very much and that will conclude our hearing for tonight.

(Proceedings adjourned at 9:00 p.m.)

*The forum reconvened on July 9, 1996, at 9:00 a.m., with Louisiana Advisory Committee Chairperson William P. Quigley presiding. Other Advisory Committee members present were Lorna E. Bourg, Laurabeth Hicks, Salvador G. Longoria, Roberta Madden, and Glenda Keller Parks. Also present were Commissioner Yvonne Lee and Commission Central Regional Office Director Melvin L. Jenkins.*

## Proceedings

**Mr. Quigley.** Good morning. My name is Bill Quigley, and I am the Chair of the Louisiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. We're going to continue our hearing on the issue of church burnings and the general state of race relations and civil rights.

We made a statement at the beginning of the session yesterday, and I'm not going to subject you to the entire statement. For those of you who are new, I just want to give you a few of the ground rules, and that is that this is a public hearing and it is transcribed and there is an open record. If people are interested in testifying or submitting information for the record, we will be able to allow you to furnish written information that can be put into the record, if you would contact Ms. JoAnn Daniels of the regional Commission staff. We have a fairly full schedule today, going from statements starting at 9 o'clock with hopefully a lunch break, to about 2:15 this afternoon, at which point we will be open for individuals who want to say anything that are not on the schedule. If you're interested in that, if you would see Ms. Daniels.

We have a statement from a member of Congress that I'm going to read into the record, but I would like to also recognize the fact that we have one of the members of the Commission who is from San Francisco, who was here last night and is going to be here today, and I'd like to ask her to make a few remarks. It's Commission member Yvonne Lee.

**Ms. Lee.** Thank you. Good morning. I want to join Chairwoman Mary Frances Berry who attended last night's proceedings but had to attend another meeting this morning, in thanking the Louisiana State Advisory Committee and the regional staff to the Commission for organizing this 2-day community forum.

Last night we had a very informative session with a distinguished panel of law enforcement representatives and community leadership.

There's an old Chinese saying that "with danger comes opportunity," and this rash of church burnings certainly has been disturbing and distressful for most of us, and though the church burnings happened in Louisiana and throughout the South, it has now reached the Pacific Northwest, outside Seattle, Washington.

We have today—we can seize the opportunity to unite our commitment and efforts to stop any kind of hatred and violence in our society. So I look forward to today's panel of law enforcement's experts to learn more from them about the information on the investigation and any future plans that they may have to address and monitor and prevent future incidences, and also to learn from our community leadership on their thoughts and experiences and how we can come together to address the critical issue of religious, racial, and ethnic tolerance in our society.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Quigley.** Before we start I'd like to introduce the other members of the Louisiana Advisory Committee who are here, as well. Lorna Bourg, who is from New Iberia; Dr. Laurabeth Hicks from Baker; Salvador Longoria from New Orleans; and Glenda Keller Parks, who is from Baton Rouge and Baker.

Okay. It's my understanding that we will go ahead and start. Is there a representative from Congressman Fields' office here yet? No. Then we will start with Reverend Charles Smith, who is the pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Welcome.

**Statement of Charles Smith, Pastor,  
Shiloh Baptist Church, Baton Rouge,  
Louisiana**

**Rev. Smith.** What is your format?

**Mr. Quigley.** The format is, if you don't mind, if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and some of what you can advise us in the area of these issues, and then maybe take a few questions from us.

**Rev. Smith.** I'm Charles Smith. I'm pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, an intercity church that's 124 years old. We had an incident there on Thursday morning following the third Sunday in June where a hangman's noose was placed on the front door of our church.

I happened to not be in the city at the time. I was attending a meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. One of my church officers called me early that morning and informed me of this.

I advised him to call the police and he did that. The police responded very quickly and since that time we have been in touch with not only local authorities but the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. attorney and others. They have been very cooperative in their investigation. However, they've had very few leads, so at this moment we really don't have any real idea as to who did this. They are still working on it.

Our church is noted for social programs, among other things. We have a number of ministries designed primarily—outreach for the underprivileged in the community, most notable of which is a social welfare program where we regularly disburse funds to people who can't pay their utility bills, their rent, and buy them food and clothes and things of that sort.

This is done without regard to race or religion, any kind of church affiliation. It's kind of a welfare program that we operate with our own funds. We do have a full-time caseworker, who conducts this program, and you frequently see people of different racial backgrounds on our premises, in our halls, who have come for this kind of help.

We also operate a drug prevention program called Project Lifeline, which is a program designed to help prevent high risk youngsters from getting involved in drug use. This also is a program that appeals to people who are not affiliated

with any church or religion, and they come from all over the community.

This, along with a church-based tutorial program that we operate, would account for many of the nonmembers of our church who come in. These kinds of programs have generally received a great deal of approval in the overall community in the past, so we never thought that there would be a factor in anyone trying to intimidate us, threaten us in any way.

We can only speculate that it might be—some of the outreach programs that we have might have led to this. We really don't have any idea what did lead to it. We have a large church, diverse socio-economic background. It's an African American church, for all practical purposes. We do have a few members who are not African American.

But, of course, this is not unusual either. We're really completely at a loss as to what could have been a motivation for this. I preach integration. I preach racial equality and I must confess that I'm somewhat outspoken in my preaching and I do have two broadcasts every Sunday, one at 8:30 in the morning on an FM station and one at 2:15 in the afternoon, on an AM station, and it could be that some of the things I said in my sermons might be provocative. I don't know, but at any rate we worked diligently in the community to try to create a wholesome atmosphere among all people, and we intend to continue to do this and I might say that the overall reaction to our membership to this act of intimidation, we called it, was to draw us closer together and to renew our determination to do more to work for racial harmony and justice in the future than we have in the past.

I guess that's my statement.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. May I ask you a few questions?

**Rev. Smith.** Sure.

**Mr. Quigley.** Then we'll see if anybody else here has any. You don't know who did it, so we can't really figure out why they did it, but what was the reaction of the larger community after the incident? You say your church came together and really made it stronger.

What about in the white community, black community, the larger geographical community?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, the reaction was one of shock

and, of course, sympathy towards our church. I must say that we received many, many phone calls, visits, and all of them have been very sympathetic to our cause and very encouraging.

My fellow clergy, regardless of race or denomination, have been most supportive and reassuring. Of course, the media have been encouraging. The Sunday after this happened we had press coverage from three major local TV stations, plus Gazette News Service and others. All of them expressed support for our church.

So it has been a favorable reaction towards us.

**Ms. Hicks.** I have a question. I saw the youngsters who were there and I saw the parents when they came, and my concern was how did they—how are they reacting now? What are parents and the kids as a result of this incident, and I'm aware that the parents may have had more concern about what was of the church than the kids initially?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, at present things are very much back to normal. The initial reaction was one of some fright, intimidation, particularly with the heavy response of the presence of law enforcement officers there at the church, and of course rumors do fly, and from what I can learn from my employees, a lot of parents did rush there to remove their children on the day that this happened.

I was in constant touch with my staff from St. Louis where I was, and telling them to reassure the parents that we would take whatever security measures were necessary to guarantee the safety of the children, and after a couple of days things calmed down.

This happened on a Thursday morning. By the following Monday morning things were pretty much back to normal. This has caused an extra expense on the church. Being a Center City church, with a membership that is not necessarily housed in the central city, we have had heavy security at our church anyway, because many of our members lived over there from 3:00 to 5:00, 10 miles away and drive in, not only for Sunday services, but for the various activities. We are a 7-days-a-week, 16, 17-hour a day church.

And when people come from that far, you have to assure them that their property and all is going to be protected, so we've always had heavy security but we did not have 14-hour-a-day security.

Now we have 24-hour-a-day security, which is rather expensive because we use a professional security service.

In specific answer to your question, things are back to normal and—

**Ms. Hicks.** Was anything done to work specifically with these young people to—I know you said things are back to normal, but to help them in some way understand what was creating the increase in your safety measures, et cetera?

**Rev. Smith.** Yes. My administrative assistant, who is a minister and an attorney, was on the scene and he gave reassurance and we have persons in the congregation who have counseling backgrounds and who work with these programs anyway, and they were instrumental in assuring people that the situation was under control.

**Ms. Lee.** You mentioned that you reported this incident to the law enforcement and the FBI did come by.

**Rev. Smith.** That's correct.

**Ms. Lee.** Did they explain to you whether they would consider that as a hate crime or did you know what the—how it's listed?

**Rev. Smith.** As I said, I was not in the city at the time, but I was in conversation with the U.S. attorney, as well as the local police authorities and eventually an FBI agent.

They all expressed hesitancy about really labeling this incident until they had more information to go on. Since that time it has still been impossible to really pin down enough evidence to really brand this a racial incident. We can say that it was obviously an act of hate but—and the one lead that the FBI agent told me that they had did point to a strong possibility that it was racial. But it was not definitive enough in his opinion for him to brand it as such at that time.

**Ms. Lee.** Did you or did he ask for other areas, pastors, to see if they had similar incidents?

**Rev. Smith.** No, I did not. Of course, I was aware of the burnings in this area. But there were no incidents that I knew of in the Center City area that were comparable to ours, which I really didn't consult any other pastors about. No.

**Ms. Lee.** I don't have anything else.

**Ms. Parks.** Just a few questions for information. You talked about the outreach involvement that

you and your church have. Do you have any information you can share with us on some of the activities? I know that the community of Baton Rouge has done some town meetings on race relations. I think the Federation of Churches and Synagogues has done some work.

Is that strictly Baton Rouge or is that Greater Baton Rouge, parishwide? Do you have any information on their activities?

**Rev. Smith.** The Federation of Churches and Synagogues is confined primarily to, I would say, the city limits of Baton Rouge. I was at one time president of the Federation of Churches and Synagogues and of course that was 3 or 4 years ago. All of my member churches were within the city limits of Baton Rouge at that time, although there is no prohibition for parish churches being a part, but it just so happens that most of the churches that do participate in that organization to the best of my knowledge are churches within the city.

Certainly the work of the federation is geared towards involvement of people of all racial and religious backgrounds, working cooperatively to address problems of need within the community.

Many of the activities of the federation have come under discussion by some people who might think that some things are maybe of a lower political nature than the federation should be involved in, but not to a large extent.

I think that, generally speaking, the community has been receptive to the work of the federation. I would not think that, for the most part, the work of the federation has been provocative in terms of racial unrest. I really wouldn't.

**Ms. Bourg.** Reverend, let me express dismay that your church experienced such an incident, and I'm grateful that you came to share your thoughts with us.

I did have a question about your thoughts on something. Is there anything in your opinion that could be done at the State political level to create an atmosphere that would be more conducive to improving race relations, and if so what would that be?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, the political climate in the State of Louisiana right now is becoming more and more conservative. I think that this is fairly common knowledge.

I think that the leadership within the State could certainly do more to express a concern for the inequality that minorities have had to live with in our State down through the years.

The attitude of the present government towards affirmative action I would consider to be a provocative act. At the very beginning of his administration—certainly didn't do anything to help race relations in the State.

The fact is that there is no effort that I know of that's going on in the higher levels of State government either in the executive branch or the legislative branch to bring about more racial harmony and I would think that the African American community is certainly feeling rather abandoned at this point and certainly willing to work with people who would see fit to try to maintain at least some of the gains that we feel like we have made in the last couple of decades.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you. One of the ministers last evening made a statement that, "our civil rights are violated every day here."

**Rev. Smith.** Mm-hmm.

**Ms. Bourg.** Do you join in that belief and if so, could you tell me what you would mean by that?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, I don't know if I would make the identical statement. Perhaps I would be a little bit more cautious in my expression. Certainly there are instances of civil rights violations that are becoming more and more frequent, and I think that whenever you find there is an atmosphere at the top for, I dare say, encouraging this type of thing, some people are going to respond to it.

But I don't want to paint the picture that there's nobody of good will in this community, because I work for a lot of ecumenical groups, and I work with a lot of fine people in this community of all races and backgrounds. I know that there are people of good will who are not necessarily in the spotlight, but who are doing all that they can to work for racial harmony in this community.

I think it's tragic that the leadership on the State level, particularly in the Governor's office, has taken the kind of posture that it has.

**Ms. Bourg.** I had one final question, Mr. Chair, if I might.

**Mr. Quigley.** Sure.

**Ms. Bourg.** If the Committee were to, upon



listening and learning, make some observations or recommendations to bridge the fault lines of race and poverty, what do you feel should be a process and timeline to address and take a positive action on those recommendations by community leadership from the various communities?

**Rev. Smith.** I wish you could be a bit more specific in your question. I don't know that—

**Ms. Bourg.** If this Committee, as a result of the public forum, issues a statement of observations, recommendations, for some actions that might bring about or encourage positive race relations, what do you think would be the process or what do you think would be done, if anything done, to take those recommendations and observations seriously, and with what timeline do you see any action being done upon them?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, I would hope that any recommendation that would be made by this Committee would be objective enough so that people of good will would recognize that they are in the total best interest of the State and of our local communities, and I would hope that they would be reasonable enough so that there would not be any rational objection to the recommendations that could be mustered by people in authority anywhere.

And then, of course, in terms of a timeline I would certainly hope that there would be an immediate response on the part of responsible people to work towards improvement, even people who have much more conservative views about race relations than we have been accustomed to in the last few years must admit that things are not getting better in our communities, they're getting worse, and it's going to take a little give and take on the part of everybody to improve things. I would think that any kind of objective recommendations that would come, not in behalf of a particular group, but in behalf of the kind of atmosphere and conditions and environments that we want to raise our children in and that we want to assure a better future for our posterity.

I think that it ought to be reasonable enough so that people of good will would have difficulty rejecting such recommendations.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you.

**Ms. Hicks.** Did any one positive, unexpected thing happen after this incident of the hangman's—

can you think of anything?

**Rev. Smith.** Well, I think—I don't know if I'd use the term unexpected, but certainly the positive thing that happened was that if it made people more aware of the seriousness of this situation, and I think it motivated people to want to come together more, people of good will to want to come together more.

The fact that it happened to a Center City church, woke up a lot of folk. The previous incidents in the outlying areas, which we call Baker and Zachary outlying areas—but here we were right in the heart of Baton Rouge. I'm a few blocks from First Baptist, First Presbyterian, St. James Episcopal, and St. Joseph's Cathedral. We're neighbors. We're all Center City people who have very close working relationships so to some extent I'm even kind of one of their own. I think that the fact that we do work so closely together, this happened to a church that was so nearby, touched people in a way that might not have ordinarily been touched.

But certainly I think that there is a closer bond now among our congregations than there was prior to this happening, so if people intended for it to drive us apart, it backfired on them.

**Ms. Hicks.** Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much. We appreciate your coming this morning and thank you for your testimony.

**Rev. Smith.** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Quigley.** I'd like to just for 1 second read into the record a fax that we received from a member of Congress. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee of the 18th District in Texas, sent a fax to Melvin Jenkins, the Regional Director for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights regarding the church burnings, the field hearings. It says:

**Statement of Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S.  
House of Representatives, 18th  
Congressional District, Texas**

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I want to express my strong support for the hearings into these dastardly acts and applaud Representatives Donald Payne and Cleo Fields for their leadership in these issues.

These hearings can only serve to heighten and intensify our focus on these horrible crimes. We

have to let people know that we are watching and they will not be able to get away with these crimes. It is important to recognize that we need to not only remain vigilant in our efforts to stop these hate crimes, but we must also begin to rebuild the churches and the hearts of the congregations that have been devastated.

These houses of worship will be rebuilt and the communities will be stronger after the healing process.

Sincerely,

Sheila Jackson Lee, Member of Congress.

**Mr. Quigley.** I'd like that to be put into the record for the hearing.

I'd like to go back to our agenda now. We had invited representatives of Governor Foster's office. Are any of those individuals here? We have two people. If you could just identify yourselves for the record and give us a little statement, we'd appreciate it.

**Statement of Rodney Braxton, Special Assistant to Governor Mike Foster of Louisiana**

**Mr. Braxton.** Sure. Good morning, Mr. Quigley, Commissioner Lee, members of the Advisory Committee. It's a pleasure to be here today and certainly help in this collective effort to try to bring about some understanding and some change with regards to race relations in the State.

My name is Rodney Braxton. I'm special assistant to Governor Foster. To my left is Lieutenant David Hunter of the Louisiana State Police.

Lieutenant Hunter will give you information about the investigation, at least what he can reveal. He and I were both here last night, and I think he will suffer from the same problem that some of the other law enforcement officials had in terms of what they could actually reveal to you. So I certainly hope that you will be able to indulge us in that.

When I was contacted about the forum, I was told that the Advisory Committee and the Commission wanted two types of information, one about the investigation, and I've said Lieutenant Hunter will address that, and the other would be about Governor Foster's vision for race relations in the

State.

Certainly the answer to that certainly could be considered simple, in that he would like to see that the State would certainly have good race relations and also that race neutral climate—Governor Foster believes that persons—and would like those that we have in Louisiana, that grade—I wouldn't say grade, but looks at its people based on their character, based on their quality as a citizen, not because of their race or their member of some ethnic group.

I will say that Governor Foster certainly, as a Christian, was personally offended by the burning of these churches, and I, certainly, as an African American was extremely offended by the burning of black churches. I really did not fully appreciate the gravity of it until I had the opportunity to visit one of the churches, and I was there with the pastor as he was describing to me what happened and what the damage was to his church, and I imagined in my mind, if I were he and I walked in and I saw that.

And it was extremely painful, and I just say that I was very, very offended.

The answer—you could simply say that he wanted to see a race neutral Louisiana. The difficult thing is how to get there. Certainly by forums like this, that foster some kind of understanding and a dialogue, I think this is something that this country has been dealing with since it was founded, and certainly in my opinion has only been seriously addressed since the conscious awakeness of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. It was only until that time I think that the country started really trying to address some of the problems.

When the first one happened, one of the first things Governor Foster did was to make sure that the State police were involved to the fullest extent possible to divert all available resources to the investigation of these fires. I think Lieutenant Hunter will be able to tell you that they made sure they put their top investigator, their most experienced investigator, to lead the investigation in that regard, and he has been working on nothing else since—he and his team have been working on nothing else since that time.

The other thing that he's done is he's met with community leaders throughout the State to see

what we could possibly do—what the Governor's office could possibly do in an effort to create a better environment. He's also met with the pastors of the churches that were burned to see what he could do for them personally, and what the Governor's office could do in terms of making sure this type of thing doesn't happen again.

And one of the things that we're currently working on—two of the things that we're currently working on, one is that we're currently working on setting up an advisory committee that will advise the Governor, comprised of ministers and community leaders from around the State, to advise the Governor on issues dealing with race, to certainly make sure that when policies come forth from the Governor's office, there will be something that not only is race neutral, but certainly something that will—and that I hope will not offend any segment of our society.

And finally, what we're also currently working on, setting up a reward fund that certainly will be awarded in an event that information is received that leads to the capture of individuals who perpetrated this heinous crime, and certainly that fund will—even after this crime is solved, I think that fund will remain in place in the unfortunate event something else will happen, we'll have funds available to immediately assist or whatever efforts may be needed.

As I said, it's difficult to say—it's easy to say what the vision should be. I think we all agree what the vision should be. The difficult thing is, how do we get there? I think that's something we've been struggling with a long time. Certainly we haven't even gotten to the perfect solution yet. I certainly hope that we can.

I would like to let Lieutenant Hunter come up here and give what he can reveal in terms of what our investigations are and how we got to the point that we are right now. Certainly we will be available for any questions that the council has. Thank you.

### **Statement of David Hunter, Supervisor, Investigative Support Section, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Police**

**Lt. Hunter.** Good morning. My name is David Hunter. As Mr. Braxton said, I work for the Louisiana State Police. My current job assignment is supervisor of the investigative support section here in Baton Rouge.

In early February, a few days after the fires in the Baker-Zachary area, Governor Foster called the superintendent of the State police, Colonel Whittington, and directed him to assign an investigator to the newly formed task force on these arsons.

That afternoon we took the most experienced investigator we had in the southeastern part of Louisiana, a man with over 25 years of criminal investigative experience, and assigned him to work this case full-time. We took all the other cases that he was presently working and either suspended them indefinitely or else reassigned them, so he could concentrate on this on a full-time effort.

Since that date this investigator has been working full-time with the ATF, FBI, with the arson task force, Baker Police Department and Zachary Police Department, the limited involvement also of the Louisiana State fire marshal's office, in an attempt to ferret out the perpetrators of these crimes.

There are actually—last night you were primarily talking about crimes here, the arsons in the Baker-Zachary area. In fact, there have been two other fires of black churches in Louisiana since the 1st of January. There's one April 11 in Paincourtville, Louisiana, which is in Assumption Parish, about 30 miles due south of Baton Rouge.

There was another fire on June 23 in Shreveport, Louisiana, that was also an arson of a black church. The Shreveport fire was fairly destructive. The fire in Paincourtville was fairly minimal. The Shreveport fire, like the fires that were in Baker and Zachary at night. The Paincourtville fire was set in the daytime. There have been no arrests to date in any of these arsons.

The actions of our department, in a general sense, have essentially been what you would have with any criminal investigation, that is, you reexamine the crime scene, you take a look at the evidence that was collected at the crime scene, you conduct

interviews, several hundred interviews, as you heard from Mr. Hymel last night. You conduct surveillances. You seek whatever technical assistance means are at your disposal, and you generally just put in a lot of long hours trying to get to the bottom of it.

To date we have no suspects who have been charged, as you're aware. There certainly have been no indictments. The investigator we have assigned to it is not going to be taken off this case until there's some resolution or until there's a determination. In fact, there are no future leads that can't be adequately explored.

And having said that, I guess I will respond to whatever questions you may have that I might be able to tell you about the investigation.

**Mr. Longoria.** Didn't the State police chief or whatever—I'm sorry I don't know the terminology—attend the meeting that was convened in Washington?

**Lt. Hunter.** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Longoria.** Instead of the Governor?

**Lt. Hunter.** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Longoria.** What was the result of that meeting? Actually I want to know why the Governor didn't go because I don't remember why, but what was the result of that meeting, do you know?

**Lt. Hunter.** I just talked to him briefly about it. He essentially said it was a gathering—first of all, he said the President made some very impressive remarks, essentially trying to build morale, indicate the interest of the executive branch in getting to the bottom of these crimes.

I think there may have also been some comments either during that meeting or a subsequent meeting whereby the President indicated some potential economic relief that might be given to some of the State or local agencies that were investing extensive manpower in trying to get to the bottom of this.

It also served as, I think, a rather informal forum for States to get together, albeit briefly, and have some get-together and exchange. Beyond that, the specifics are unknown to me.

**Mr. Longoria.** Do you know why the Governor didn't go?

**Mr. Braxton.** Actually, no, I don't. He didn't tell me why he didn't go, but I suspect that he wasn't

even in Louisiana when the invitation was extended and I wasn't in town. I was actually out of the country at the time, and when I returned I found out about it. I thought that it was odd that I didn't know about it prior to that. I think it came up very quickly and I don't think there was enough time—because had I been in town, I would have gone, as well, but I do not know the answer to why he didn't attend.

**Mr. Longoria.** I guess the reason why I was concerned as to what happened at the meeting and why Governor Foster wasn't there personally, was kind of specifically dovetailing with what Reverend Smith had said in terms of, especially in Louisiana, being a citizen and taxpayer of Louisiana, sometimes I think there is an environment, a feeling amongst a lot of us that the leadership at the top doesn't set the example, doesn't set the policy, and in effect really turns its back on what could be healing, what could be constructive.

I mean, I don't have to—we all live in Louisiana. We know of recent—some of Governor Foster's remarks.

**Mr. Braxton.** Right.

**Mr. Longoria.** Which are to be embarrassing and I'm not even an African American, and then when the President of the United States convenes a meeting of all the Governors of all the affected States, and hours later you find out that our Governor, the elected representative of each and every one of us, in my opinion doesn't think it's important enough to attend, if I had lit the fire at St. Paul's Baptist or Cypress Grove or whatever, I would be laughing. I would be thinking to myself, obviously nothing is going to be done to me. Obviously the mainstream opinion in Louisiana supports what I'm doing, or at least doesn't really care about what happened.

And I think if I can personally say something to your—Rodney, I'm not getting on you personally—

**Mr. Braxton.** I understand that.

**Mr. Longoria.** I am getting on the Governor personally.

**Mr. Braxton.** I understand.

**Mr. Longoria.** As a taxpayer and citizen, and I just say that for the record, if you could convey to him that Salvador Longoria of New Orleans is

embarrassed—

**Mr. Braxton.** I understand that.

**Mr. Longoria.** And if we're going to start healing, Baker, Zachary, East Baton Rouge, and Louisiana, because God knows we need major healing in this State, it has to start in the Governor's mansion. It has to start with him talking and acting like somebody who really cares about everybody in Louisiana, and what's happened here does not just affect African Americans in Baker and Zachary. It affects me in New Orleans, and it hurts me and it bothers me and I really, really think that one of the most important things that can happen toward healing everything in this community and Louisiana is that Foster would really take an active, active role—a role from the heart, if he really means it, as a Christian or whatever he is, to really heal that. I think you've got to put your actions where your words are, your words where your action is, and you've got to attend meetings, you've got to come out, you have to tell the people of Louisiana, "I care, I'm going to do something about it." Just sending a representative to an important meeting or just talking the talk I don't think is enough. I think it's incongruous for him to say, "I care about what's happening," and then 2 weeks later he says he's going to support an ex-Ku Klux Klan member for Senate.

What are we to think as citizens, that he really cares? I don't think so. I'm not putting you on the spot but I think that you should convey that personally from me.

**Mr. Braxton.** I understand your comments and I appreciate your comments, but I really don't think I need to respond to that one.

**Ms. Bourg.** I have a question. I'm a little confused and I'd like to ask Mr. Braxton and Lieutenant Hunter. The Governor, as I understand it from what you just said and from what I had heard previously, characterized the meeting in Washington as just a meeting, where essentially the executive branch was trying to get involved in what basically should be a law enforcement issue.

And yet at the same time we hear over and over again that we need to have society's support and society's involvement and local community involvement in working with police even on law enforcement issues. Whether or not it's a racial

issue of the burning of the churches or a particular church, or a hate crime of another sort or against religion or whatever it would be, it certainly would seem that we would want to take a position of standing against actions where churches are burned and that to convene a meeting at the highest level in our country would be a fitting thing to do, especially in light of the fact that the State police and everyone else wished communities to be involved in law enforcement in supporting it.

And so could you speak to that inconsistency in thinking?

**Mr. Braxton.** Well, I don't know how I could speak to what you would describe as an inconsistency in thinking, but I will say this, I don't think that it's fair—certainly I know that what you know of Governor Foster is only what you read in the paper and what you see on television, but I know him, personally, and, certainly, he doesn't always say the correct thing in the public eye.

But I will say this, I don't think that it would be fair to say just because he did not attend, personally, the conference in Washington, D.C., that he does not care about what is going on.

**Ms. Bourg.** Excuse me, Mr. Braxton. I'm sorry, but I was speaking specifically to your comments that the Governor characterized the meeting essentially, "As just a meeting where the executive branch wanted to get involved in what is essentially a law enforcement issue."

**Mr. Braxton.** That was not my quote. I didn't say that. To be perfectly honest, maybe—Lieutenant, did you say that? I didn't say that. I don't know that Governor Foster said that, to be perfectly honest.

And I will say that if Governor Foster did say that. That probably sounds like one of his quotes, but, again, that's just how he speaks. He's a very simple kind of guy. I don't know how to explain that. I don't think that it's reflective, even though it seems to be in your mind, reflective that he doesn't care. I can't resolve that conflict for you.

**Ms. Bourg.** The Governor does—as an advisor to the Governor—the Governor is advised of how important the words and the symbols and the speech from someone who is the Governor of a State where race relations are clearly at an edge, how important those symbols and speeches and words

are.

**Mr. Braxton.** Yes, he is. As a matter of fact, literally moments after the David Duke comment I was in his office and he and I were talking about that, and I impressed upon him that what he stated was—that it was wrong and what the impression was going to be, and of course, that came to bear.

But he certainly was extremely sorry about the comment. Now, I think that what people wanted him to do was to come out and say David Duke is a hate monger and he's a Nazi, et cetera, et cetera, and I denounce him. Governor Foster would never say that about anybody.

He personally would not demean and I think that even this Advisory Committee said in their statement last night that they would not allow someone to defame or demean anyone in public, and the Governor holds that same position.

What he did was come out and say that he would not support anybody for Senate or for any public office that is a member of a hate group or is a hate monger, et cetera, and you can infer whatever you would like from that, but I think it's clear.

**Ms. Hicks.** I would like to ask you a question. I want to make a comment first. When I learned the following morning that four churches had been damaged in some way, I was shocked, enraged, just lots of things. And I listened to see how my Governor or somebody in that area would respond to such a shocking thing.

That's the most unusual thing that I've known of. I didn't hear it, and you can help me if you will share with me, where did he make a statement that showed an equal shock or equal response of pain at seeing this occur in his own State?

**Mr. Braxton.** Well, Governor Foster has made statements that certainly were against it. The burnings were repugnant, that it certainly wouldn't be tolerated in Louisiana. One of Governor Foster's things that I guess is a negative is that he's not the most passionate public speaker.

I've been with him on occasions where he said things about the church burnings and the way he was against it, and he was personally offended and upset about it. I know one particular radio talk show that he was on that he spoke about it.

But again, I certainly wouldn't characterize his lack of passion when he makes those statements as

an indication that he does not care.

I certainly don't think I will ever—me personally—any timeframe allotted or any time up here convince anybody on this council that that is any different than what already your impression is, but I'm telling you that it's different.

**Ms. Parks.** You said something about establishing an advisory committee for issues dealing with race. Has the government established any procedures yet for doing so?

**Mr. Braxton.** No. Actually we're working on that right now.

**Ms. Parks.** Do you have any criteria for appointments?

**Mr. Braxton.** No. Well, we primarily are looking at right now the criteria for ministers—not criteria, but I mean the fact that you're a minister. The question is we want to make sure that we touch every single part of the State when we bring in the ministers, and certainly some of the ministers who are directly affected by the church burnings will also be contacted, but—

**Ms. Parks.** Do you have a timeline set yet for when—

**Mr. Braxton.** Oh, I think the Governor wants to do that very soon. I would say within the next month, month and a half, that would be accurate.

**Ms. Parks.** What about mission statement or goals or—

**Mr. Braxton.** Oh, all that is included, yes.

**Ms. Parks.** But you don't have any of that established as yet?

**Mr. Braxton.** No.

**Ms. Parks.** Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** I hope you get well-paid because you have a tough job here today.

**Mr. Braxton.** Well, I do work for the State of Louisiana.

**Mr. Quigley.** Well, then you don't get well-paid. I know that. You know that this Committee sent a letter to Governor Foster in early March about the church burnings, asking him to speak out on it, asking him to meet with us about it, asking him to meet with members of the Commission on Civil Rights about it, to try to participate either publicly, privately, quietly, loudly, in any way possible to do something about this issue. To the best of my knowledge, and Ms. Robinson, correct me, we

have never heard any response at all from the Governor, and I know you're his assistant. Do you know why he wouldn't have responded?

**Mr. Braxton.** There was no particular reason, and it probably would fall on my shoulders as to why he didn't respond. To be perfectly honest, I really don't know why we did not respond. It wasn't any conscious effort not to do it.

I will say this. I am an advisor to Governor Foster and since he took off on January 8, and certainly this does not mean this is not an important issue, but the Governor has had, I think, by everybody's estimation, a very ambitious agenda. And I'm not saying we would never have any intention not to meet with you, but I don't think that Governor—the Governor was really interested in getting the State moving forward in terms of economic development and changes in reform and I think—that's not to say that he didn't think this is important, I just think that it's something that unfortunately just did not occur.

I think I directed someone to provide the information because you also asked about information about the investigations, and I think that information was forwarded. I don't know if Ms. Robinson can tell you whether or not that information was forwarded.

I think we did forward that information, because it was also requested. And if anybody needs to take responsibility for a meeting not happening, that would be me.

**Ms. Lee.** Just a followup question, on the advisory committee that you're in the process of setting up, is this going to be an ad hoc situation or long-term or if so, what is the priority for funding to sustain this kind of a committee?

**Mr. Braxton.** Well, I think at this point it probably would be ad hoc. I don't know if we have planned a budget or what it would cost. Certainly if there were costs, the Governor would provide the proper funding to make sure the council is successful.

**Ms. Bourg.** I had a forensics question I wanted to ask you.

**Mr. Quigley.** While you're still there, can I ask one thing first, and that is, if there was some sort of oversight that resulted in the lack of response to our request for a meeting, could you, based on the

hearing today, and I know you were here last night, could you reurge the Governor on our behalf that we would like to meet with him? It doesn't have to be publicly. It can be privately, but we would like to meet with him about this issue to find out his concern and the things that you have communicated to us, and to find out how we could work together to do something about this.

As the representative of the State police said, it's not just Baker, it's not just Zachary, it's things that have happened in New Orleans and Shreveport and Assumption Parish and the like, and this is the kind of thing that we as a State I think—I know the Governor has a lot of priorities—

**Mr. Braxton.** I will say this. I will certainly advise him on that and I think that he will do that, and I think you will enjoy meeting him.

**Mr. Quigley.** I know Ms. Robinson has a few questions.

**Ms. Bourg.** I will yield to Ms. Robinson—well, I'll ask a forensics question then. Last evening I had asked a question about forensics and how much forensic support there has been, and I could be mistaken. I was trying to see back in my notes—it may have been the mayor or someone else who said that there was not a lot of forensic work done, and I wondered if you might speak to that.

And secondly, there was, later, a statement made that there was sometimes inadvertent destruction of evidence in the fighting of the fires. Could you talk about—when putting out a fire, you might toss something out a window and it might be a piece of evidence, so there was some discussion about the possibility of additional training, and I would like you to speak a little bit, if you might, about have you had sufficient forensics support? Has there been an aggressive forensic component in addition to the interviews and the surveys and the other things that you've done?

**Lt. Hunter.** The forensic support I think is, from my limited knowledge, somewhat limited knowledge of the case, first of all, and, secondly, my very limited knowledge of arson investigations.

I think it's probably been adequate in relationship to the physical evidence that has been recovered and submitted. The lead agency for that is the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. They

have laboratories that are specially set up and designed for the reconstruction and interpretation of arson-related evidence.

The FBI lab, as probably everyone knows, is extremely capable. What involvement forensically they may have had in this, I'm not sure. The State police also has a crime lab. I'm not sure what our capability is to investigate arson-related fires. I don't know if we've ever done one.

The second part of your question in relationship to training—well, let me refer briefly to the destruction of evidence. I think it's a given that evidence can be inadvertently destroyed or altered during the fighting of a fire that may be arson initiated.

I'm not sure how that could be combated, as we have the same situation, for example, when we have a violent crime scene and you have a victim who needs medical assistance, usually the first priority is to render assistance and aid to that injured party and the second priority is to investigate the crime that caused that person to become injured or perhaps killed.

So I suspect the same problem exists in arson-related fires. I'm not sure what the answer is, to train firefighters perhaps; first responders to the scene to perhaps be more cognizant of the potential that it may be a crime scene rather than just a fire scene per say.

Yes, I think that would probably be helpful. I'm not sure of the mechanics of it and I have no idea how we would set it up.

Frankly, the State police has extremely limited experience in working arson-related fires. There was a comment made last night that we have arson investigators and we would dispatch and apply to these types of cases. That's not in fact the case.

We took the most experienced criminal investigator I had, general criminal investigator, and he is having to learn on the job the intricacies of arson investigation.

Now, the other parts that are part and parcel to the criminal investigation, as I said earlier, general collection of evidence, interviewing witnesses, conducting surveillances, technical support, are things that person is extremely conversant with and experienced with.

But we do not have a great depth of investiga-

tion, arson investigations at all. This is probably one of the first arson cases I remember in my history on the department.

**Mr. Quigley.** Ms. Robinson has a couple questions.

**Ms. Robinson.** Can you hear me, Mr. Braxton?

**Mr. Braxton.** I sure can.

**Ms. Robinson.** I have some pointed questions to you. Does the State of Louisiana have a human relations commission?

**Mr. Braxton.** They have a human rights commission.

**Ms. Robinson.** Are you the director?

**Mr. Braxton.** I am. Well, I was. They are searching for a new director.

**Ms. Robinson.** Are you serving in an interim capacity at this point?

**Mr. Braxton.** Yes.

**Ms. Robinson.** Okay. Does your department receive complaints of discrimination, hate crimes, et cetera?

**Mr. Braxton.** No. Hate crimes, no. We deal strictly with discrimination in the areas of employment, public accommodations and unfair credit practices.

**Ms. Robinson.** Okay. Has your department been involved in any way in the areas surrounding the hate crimes and race relations?

**Mr. Braxton.** No.

**Ms. Robinson.** You haven't done anything—

**Mr. Braxton.** We have not.

**Ms. Robinson.** —on this issue?

**Mr. Braxton.** No, we have not.

**Ms. Robinson.** Why—

**Mr. Braxton.** It is beyond—

**Ms. Robinson.** Yeah.

**Mr. Braxton.** —our jurisdiction. Actually, there have been several attempts to expand our jurisdiction to include hate crimes, et cetera, but legislation has never been able to pass, and the limited resources that we have at this point, which is another thing we're working on, to increase the funding to that commission—the limited resources we have, all of them are directed to investigate employment discrimination claims, which we have a lot of.

So in order to do that, and to try to address that, we just—there aren't the manhours available.



**Ms. Robinson.** How big is your staff and what's your budget?

**Mr. Braxton.** The budget is \$100,000. The staff is two persons, the director—I would say four persons, the director, secretary, and two part-time law clerks.

**Ms. Robinson.** What is your case load?

**Mr. Braxton.** I would estimate we have approximately 350 cases to deal with.

**Ms. Robinson.** And those are basically employment discrimination?

**Mr. Braxton.** Yes, they are.

**Ms. Robinson.** And you said that there has been some dialogue or discussion about including hate crimes—

**Mr. Braxton.** Well, I think for the last two to three regular sessions—one particular senator out of New Orleans, Senator John Johnson, has attempted to create a hate crime—I mean, there was actually no definition of a hate crime in the Louisiana statutes. Tried to create that, tried to give some jurisdiction to the commission to deal with that, and to the law enforcement agencies around the State to deal with that, for us to compile statistics, but has never been able to go through the process to get passed.

And I was incidentally—that the Governor—when he was Senator Foster, supported that legislation every time.

**Ms. Robinson.** So there is really no tracking system—

**Mr. Braxton.** No.

**Ms. Robinson.** —or supporting system in the State of Louisiana on hate crimes?

**Mr. Braxton.** Like I said, there is absolutely no such thing as a hate crime in Louisiana statutes, and so we would—what would we be tracking if we don't even know how to define it?

**Ms. Robinson.** Are you familiar with the Anti-Defamation League?

**Mr. Braxton.** Yes, I am.

**Ms. Robinson.** And I believe we will have a representative from that agency make a presentation today. The Anti-Defamation League has a very, very good background information on how hate crimes are defined. As a matter of fact, the Federal Government has defined hate crimes as well, so the suggestion that you don't know what

a hate crime is—

**Mr. Braxton.** No, no. I'm not saying I don't know what a hate crime is. No, I'm not suggesting that I don't know what a hate crime is. What I stated was is that hate crimes are not defined in Louisiana. When you say do a composite on hate crimes, that's what I'm saying.

We can define what is a homicide, what is a battery, what is breaking and entering, because they're defined in State statutes, so I'm not saying I don't know what a hate crime is. I know what a hate crime is. I'm saying it's not defined in the Louisiana statutes.

**Ms. Robinson.** Okay. Well, we did hear some comments last night that some individuals didn't know what a hate crime was, and they had never heard of the word before.

**Mr. Braxton.** Right.

**Ms. Robinson.** Do you think that there's a need for the State to address hate crimes in a very systematic way?

**Mr. Braxton.** I think there is, and every time that legislation came forward, I supported the legislation in my capacity as director of the commission on human rights.

**Ms. Robinson.** Thank you.

**Ms. Lee.** I just have one more question to Lieutenant Hunter. Certainly, we don't want to see any more arsons happening in the future, but do you have any plans in place, because earlier you mentioned that many of the inspectors were going through the investigation for the first time or something? Do you have any plans in place to train not one but most of your other investigators to go through like these kind of arsons, maybe the training could be from the FBI or ATF, whoever? Do you have that in place right now?

**Lt. Hunter.** We would be receptive to that. We have no plans for it at this time. Primarily at a State level, arsons have historically been investigated by the State fire marshal's office. They have an arson investigations unit within the State fire marshal's office.

State police have traditionally deferred to the expertise and experience of the State fire marshal arson investigators, and I think that's one of the primary reasons we've never been called into an arson case.

I think the reason that the Governor directed the superintendent of State police to get us involved in this one is because there was a suggestion and certainly the possibility that this may be related to something that is—has a racial basis, and apparently the Governor thought that was of sufficient concern that he wanted us on an exceptional basis to get involved in this case.

I don't think that's going to necessarily set up a pattern, unless we see these church fires continue throughout the State. If that were to be the instance, I suspect we would get probably more people involved, if necessary, and also certainly the requisite training to get those people equipped to carry out those investigations successfully.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming this morning. We appreciate the information that you've brought us and hope that you can share our information with the Governor, as well.

**Mr. Braxton.** We will, and I'll set up that meeting for you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Just looking at the agenda, before we break for lunch we are due to speak with the representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the FBI, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Department, and the Pastor of the Shady Grove Baptist Church.

So we will call now Jerry Himmelstein, the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League in New Orleans.

**Statement of Jerry Himmelstein, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League, New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Mr. Himmelstein.** Commissioner Lee, members of the Committee, my name is Jerry Himmelstein. I'm the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League [ADL]. I'm here representing the ADL, including Bob Kutcher, who serves on the Louisiana Advisory Committee, and who served 4 years as the chair of the ADL South Central Board.

The ADL appreciates your holding this hearing and the Commission holding the other hearings around the country to focus attention on these crimes and to give voice to the collective outrage of people of good will who feel the outrage that

people of good will across the country feel about these crimes.

I've been reading the material of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that Ms. Robinson sent to me, and it's clear to me that the Commission and the ADL agree point by point on responses to hate crimes in general and, in particular, on appropriate responses to these church arsons.

I think you'll be able to see that in the written statement that I have provided to the Committee, and I won't try to cover all the eight points in that written statement, but I do want to emphasize three of the eight points, based partly on what I heard here last night and partly on what I've been hearing this morning and just now.

Ms. Bourg, for instance, last night asked about training for law enforcement regarding hate crimes, and I think that was an important question and more training for law enforcement personnel in responding to hate crimes is direly needed.

Identification of hate crimes, careful reporting of hate crimes, and sensitive response to the victims of hate crimes are all vital and often law enforcement just don't have the proper training. Such training happens occasionally in Louisiana, but not often enough. I hope that the Louisiana Advisory Committee can help to find ways to promote that.

Ms. Bourg also asked another good question last night about hate crimes reporting. In 1994, the latest year for which statistics are available, as you will see in the table at the back of the written statement that I gave you, less than 100 of Louisiana's 348 law enforcement agencies participated in the FBI hate crimes reporting.

Baker and Zachary, by the way, did participate. The city of Baton Rouge did not. It was the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that catalyzed the hate crime statistics act, as you all very well know, I'm sure, and for very good reason.

We have to know more than we know about the size of the problem. So I hope we'll be able to work together to increase participation in the reporting of hate crimes, because as it is we know a lot more about the number of car thefts than we do about the number of hate crimes.

And finally, as was just talked about, and I appreciate Ms. Robinson's questions to the representative of the Governor, I hope the Louisiana

advisory board will be able to help Louisiana join the 34 other States that enhance penalties for crimes that are committed because of who the victims are.

In the back of the publication on hate crimes you'll find a map that shows the States that enhance penalties. Thirty-four of them do. Louisiana does not.

Mayor Morial of New Orleans, when he was the State senator 4 years ago, introduced a hate crimes bill based on ADL model legislation, which would have provided training for law enforcement, provided a State system for recordkeeping on hate crimes, and would have enhanced penalties for crimes committed based upon the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

That bill has passed the Louisiana Senate four times by wide margins, but it's failed every time in the Louisiana House of Representatives. It's failed to come out of Committee two of those times and failed on the house floor two other times.

So I hope that the Louisiana Advisory Committee can lend its weight to the important and continuing effort to get Louisiana to join the 34 other States that have hate crimes legislation, so that when you hold a hearing like this another time, people won't be so mystified by your questions about hate crimes, and we can have a more informed discussion about them.

I want to thank you again for holding these hearings and I'd be happy to try to answer any questions about anything I've said or anything in the material that I've given you.

**Mr. Quigley.** I would like to thank you on behalf of the Committee, right off the bat, for the statement and the information that you have provided us. It's the most detailed and most specific information that we've received so far, and I think it's going to have a significant impact on how we go about trying to figure out how we should respond to the information that we're receiving.

I would like you to briefly touch on one of the other points that you have, and that is Congress should increase funding for the Justice Department's Community Relations Service, and examine whether additional funding is necessary to expand FBI civil rights investigations and ATF arson investigations. Would you explain why that's

important and how that differs from what the current situation is?

**Mr. Himelstein.** Well, we just believe that there's great potential in the Community Relations service. It's not necessarily realized, but it's a good idea and perhaps with stronger funding and more staff, there may be opportunities for that service to promote the kind of healing that you're searching for ways to do.

I believe that the law that just passed, the Church Arsons Act, will provide more resources that we all want to see that can be devoted to solving these crimes and preventing them in the future.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you.

**Ms. Lee.** Being from the State where we have the penalty enhancement law in California, I always find it troubling why other States don't have these kind of laws. Can you show me why a State such as Louisiana is slow in passing to us average citizens, just a decent thing to do? Why is it that you still have not gotten this law passed?

**Mr. Himelstein.** Well, the objections to that law have come from two sources, when it goes to hearings before the Louisiana House of Representatives. One source consists of people who I think can fairly be called extremists and have been among the early and most devoted supporters of David Duke.

And recently the opposition has come from the Christian Coalition, who objects to the Louisiana statute as—the Louisiana bill as drafted, because it includes sexual orientation as a category.

**Mr. Quigley.** Other members? We certainly appreciate your presentation and the very, very important information that you shared with us. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Himelstein.** Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Next for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, we will have Mr. Hamilton Bobb. For those of you looking on the agenda, he's appearing in the place of Robert Stellingworth.

**Mr. Bobb.** Robert Stellingworth is our special agent in charge. I'm representing him on this. I'm the assistant special agent in charge.

This morning what we had decided to do with the FBI is that we will do a joint presentation. I have the Assistant Special Agent in Charge from

the FBI right here with me.

**Mr. Quigley.** Terrific. That would be fine. Thank you. Come on up. Good morning.

**Statement of Hamilton Bobb, Assistant Special Agent In Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Louisiana**

**Mr. Bobb.** First let me thank the Commission for bringing us up here to address you and to answer any questions you may have. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI look at the burning of churches as a particularly heinous crime, because all those who would attack a church seek to strike at the most fundamental liberties we have in this country.

Historically churches, and particularly black churches, have served as places of sanctuary for the community, and symbols of freedom. We, ATF and the FBI, are committed to fully applying our investigative resources to determine the causes of those fires and arrest the people responsible for them.

In fulfilling that obligation we've also looked at the aspects of prevention, and we have jointly come up with a booklet on the church threat assessment guide, which we have distributed throughout the State of Louisiana and several other southern States to pastors and congregations.

It is a guide to help repel any threats that may come up and it's not the do-all and end-all, but it is of some assistance in preventing church arsons.

In addition, what we have said in this guide is that we must all work together, groups like yours, churches, congregations, to work to prevent these crimes and to help in solving these crimes.

In the solving part of that, what we do look towards the congregations for a lot of assistance, the information the congregations have is sometimes very helpful to us.

We look to those congregations to provide us information. We solicit support. We hand out the booklets, and we stand willing, ready and able to do anything that is necessary to bring these fires to a stop and to arrest those persons responsible for the ones that have already taken place.

We are ready to answer any questions that you may have for us.

**Ms. Bourg.** Here I come again with those foren-

sic questions. We heard the State police speak to a lack of depth in the forensics resources or in— certainly in relation to the investigation of arson. We heard last evening of inadvertent disturbance or destruction of evidence in the fighting of a fire and perhaps the need to have more local training on that.

And while we're interested in creating atmospheres where this kind of thing does not occur, we're also interested in catching the folks that did it. And so could you speak to the forensics resources that have been brought to bear?

I have in mind the Oklahoma bombing and the Twin Towers bombing I guess, if I'm stating it correctly, in New York. And so could you speak a little bit to the forensics that have been brought to bear on the four, for example, church burnings in this area?

**Mr. Bobb.** In arson investigations typically forensics come into play when you have an accelerant. If you determine there's an accelerant involved, it is then sent out to the labs for analysis to determine the type of accelerant.

Rest assured that the same lab facilities that were used in Oklahoma City and the World Trade Center bombings are now being employed to do the forensic on these fires.

What we do have though in an arson is in many cases the evidence is all gone. It's all completely destroyed by fire, and all you have is ashes to work with, which makes it historically more difficult to find the evidence.

But the labs are working at it. We have labs in Atlanta and in Rockville, Maryland, that are currently involved in this investigation, and I'm sure the FBI's lab is also involved as well.

**Ms. Hicks.** What kind of response have you had to the booklet that you developed and disseminated?

**Mr. Bobb.** Last week we had a meeting up here in Baton Rouge with the pastors of churches who have been burned and the pastors of churches who have not been burned. There were probably 250 people in attendance.

The response was very positive. There were lots of questions as to how they can get assistance in doing some of the things that the booklet has said, and that involved us contacting the local police

departments and sheriff's departments to assist some of the churches and implement some of the security steps, but there are a lot of steps in there that can be taken by the churches themselves to secure their facility.

For instance, the lighting, removing debris around the churches so that you don't give people places to start a fire. But the response overall has been positive to the booklet.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you.

**Ms. Lee.** I just have several questions. First of all, this is very impressive from first glance.

**Mr. Bobb.** Thank you.

**Ms. Lee.** With this country's population getting so diversified, do you have any plans to make this in other languages, even though currently the churches being affected are in the South—we've had isolated incidents that happened to Asian churches and I'm sure this would be very beneficial to other communities, who may speak a different language other than English? I hope you will take that to heart.

The second thing is do you have any mechanism in place to coordinate this region's ATF force—ATF activities to other areas who are investigating similar church arsons, so you could at least share information? That's the second question.

The third question is how do you train your agents? Do you provide them with ongoing training because arsons or other similar crimes are getting more sophisticated? Do you provide regular training to keep them on top of—at least a step ahead of these perpetrators?

**Mr. Bobb.** Question one, your suggestion is well-taken and we both agree that we will take it back and see what we can do about getting it published in other languages.

Question number two, there is a tremendous amount of coordination going on, especially throughout the southern region of Alabama and Mississippi, Georgia, and the Carolinas. We meet at least once every 2 weeks with the chief investigators. When I say we, I mean ATF and the FBI investigators from Louisiana, meet routinely and speak with the investigators from the other States as to what kind of patterns they are seeing, looking for similarities, and trying to put things together.

All these things are going into data bases that both agencies are sharing so we can compare the fires here with the fires there, check them for similarities and just comparing notes in general.

Question three, on training. An ATF arson investigator has a 2-year training program. It involves visiting at least 100 fire scenes under the supervision of the trained—what we call a certified fire investigator.

What they do is look at fire patterns, the burn patterns. They go through a lot of scientific training and lab work before they become certified.

After the 2-year period and the hundred fires that they had to actually work on, then they can come out and be certified as a certified fire investigator.

The training continues after they're certified. They're required to do a certain number of fires annually to keep their certification intact.

Does that answer your questions?

**Ms. Lee.** I guess I just have one followup question. Throughout yesterday and this morning's testimonies, there seems to be questions on how people define hate crime. Earlier this morning Reverend Smith said the agency told him that there's a strong indication that there was—it was pointing to a hate crime when something happened to his church, but they would not define it as a hate crime.

Does your agency provide that kind of a training besides the technical forensic training in arson; do you work with the FBI or other Federal agencies to help them identify potential groups who may be involved with these things or just the issue itself on hate crimes?

**Mr. Bobb.** When we have a question as to whether this is a hate motivated-crime, we will usually turn to our big brothers, the FBI. They have jurisdiction over these things and they would lead the investigation in those matters.

We do the arson, explosive type investigation. They would lead that area of it. How we define hate crimes? We don't. We look to Congress for guidance as to how it's defined.

**Mr. Buttram.** The Department of Justice has a definition of a hate crime. It's published, and we use that as the basis for the compiling of statistics relative to hate crimes in the United States. I'll be happy to get that. I don't unfortunately have the

exact wording here, and I'll be happy to provide that to the Commission if you so desire.

Unfortunately, one of the difficult things is to identify motivation in some of these things. It's really the crux of the investigation. However, I think you can rest assured that when certain types of crimes, like attacking a church occurs, we assume that it's a hate crime until it's proven otherwise. I think that's where our basis starting point is.

There are many other reasons why something like that may have been done, but I think, just by the very nature of the crime, that we start with the assumption that a hate crime has occurred.

Certainly that would be reported in statistics until such time as we determine that, in fact, it wasn't.

**Mr. Quigley.** For the record, could you identify yourself?

**Mr. Buttram.** Sure. Sorry, I apologize to you. I'm George Buttram. I'm the assistant agent in charge for the FBI Office in New Orleans, which has responsibility for the State of Louisiana. Our friends from ATF and we decided to do this jointly since we're working these cases jointly, we're working them as a team with our State and local counterparts. And we thought we'd best be able to address your questions and concerns here as a team, because that's exactly the way we view this, and the way we believe we're going to obtain the best results is using all of the resources that are available to us on the Federal, State, and local level.

I want to reiterate the fact that we consider this to be the most serious of crimes. We have over 200 agents working these cases at this point, and probably my guess is more now. And that's in addition to the other resources the ATF and the other jurisdictions that are working this with us, and I can assure you it is the top priority in the FBI right now to solve these cases.

**Mr. Quigley.** Could I ask you a little bit about that? In terms of people in Louisiana working on it, is there—I know you have a large number of agents and, if necessary, you would call on all of them. How many of them are working regularly, say this week on this?

**Mr. Bobb.** It would depend on the situation. It would depend on how many leads we have out-

standing, what leads are available. At any given point in time we may have two-thirds of the Baton Rouge resident agency working. If we need additional resources from New Orleans, we'll send them in.

We have a case agent who is assigned full-time to the case, cases here in Baton Rouge, full-time case agents in Shreveport and New Orleans. All I can tell you is it may vary from day to day, depending on the resources we need to address the outstanding leads, but the one thing I'll personally guarantee you is that the director has made it very clear, we'll put as many resources on this problem as we need to get them solved.

**Ms. Bourg.** I had a question, if I might. You mentioned that we use all of the resources and you also—and I agree with you—spoke to the importance of trying to determine the motives, and that leads you to begin to come up with various theories that might lead you in your investigation.

My question would be, how diverse is the think tank group that is examining possible motives as well as the theories? I had an occasion where the Air Force, for about 30 years, had investigated an air crash and they had used a national security agency as well as the CIA, and until a diversity was brought into the thinking, no one had ever questioned any of the women in the area where the plane had gone down, only they had questioned military folks.

And when the questioning began of the women, they got a whole new depth of information. So it's a very important question to me on the diversity of the guys or the folks that sit around the table and do the think tanking on what motives and theories. Are there ministers involved? Are there people of color? Are there women? What is the depth of diversity in the think tank group?

**Mr. Bobb.** Our agency looks like America. As a matter of fact, we have some of the same problems America has on the whole.

The people working the fires make up our diverse work force. We have blacks, whites, Hispanics, non-Hispanics, male, female, everyone working on it, but when you approach an arson investigation, you don't approach it as a think tank saying what are the possible motives.

You approach it as a wide-open thing. There are

a range of things that has to be looked at, and you're going to look at everything, not focusing on any one particular idea that any one person came with on your think tank, but you're going to look at everything in an arson investigation and try to eliminate, it's by a process of elimination that you actually are able to focus where you should be focused.

**Ms. Bourg.** Well, certainly the facts would guide the investigation is what I hear you—

**Mr. Bobb.** The facts will guide the investigation, exactly.

**Ms. Bourg.** In the absence of a lot of the forensics and witnesses and so on, I did hear this gentleman speak to the extreme importance of trying to understand the motives that might have led to this, because that will direct the investigation, so I reiterate my question to you—

**Mr. Buttram.** Maybe I mislead you a little bit. I'm not sure that motivation leads our investigation. I think the facts probably lead our investigation. However, motive is a very important part of the investigation. All right, because it will lead us ultimately along with the facts of the investigation to identifying someone responsible for it.

However, I'm not sure—and I don't want to mislead you—it doesn't drive our investigation. Facts drive our investigation. And usually they'll take us down the road that we're looking for, but motive is part of those facts.

We also utilize and have utilized and will continue to utilize our behavioral science unit back at Quantico, our investigative support unit back at Quantico, which will give us—do some—I don't want to use the word profiling, because it wouldn't be correct, but provide us some additional guidance relative to the type of individual who might commit one of these crimes.

So there are some other people other than just the agency personnel who are looking at this back there. We have some professional people and psychological profiling and behavioral science that are also looking into it.

Again, like ATF, we have a very diverse work force. Our most experienced people are being assigned these cases, without regard to their sex or their color, and I think we would utilize whatever resource we think would be advantageous to us

and certainly if anybody has a suggestion of a course that we should be looking at, please make it available to us and we'll consider using it.

**Ms. Bourg.** I would like a followup, if I might. How large would you characterize the core team that is directing the investigation?

**Mr. Buttram.** Just in Louisiana or—

**Ms. Bourg.** Let's say the core team that makes up the decision about what direction to go in, whether it's about thinking or motivation or facts on the four churches here? The core team that sits in a room and does this.

**Mr. Buttram.** Probably—again, we're working this as on a task force situation, so I'm going to give you the four churches here in the Baton Rouge area. Probably a total of 10 individuals are contributing every day to that task force.

That would include prosecutors, members of ATF, the FBI, Louisiana State Police, State fire marshal's office, East Baton Rouge Arson Task Force, and there may be other local officers coming in and out, depending on the particular issue that's being addressed, but I'm going to give you a rough estimate, 10 to 15 people on a day-to-day basis.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you.

**Mr. Buttram.** That doesn't include the managers though. Each of the things that are being discussed out there at our level, make sure that we're not missing anything, and quite honestly it's being reviewed on a level above us at our headquarters.

**Ms. Bourg.** On that core team of 10 to 15, could you give me the ethnic, gender, and racial breakdown of that group?

**Mr. Buttram.** Do you guys know off the top of your head? We'll get you the exact numbers if you want that.

**Ms. Bourg.** What is your general—

**Mr. Buttram.** Sixty percent nonminority to 40 percent minority is a rough estimate.

**Ms. Bourg.** And on gender?

**Mr. Buttram.** Probably 90 percent male at this point.

**Ms. Bourg.** Thank you.

**Mr. Longoria.** Just a quick question. Since I assume, especially in the area of hate crimes, that you're going to work hand in hand with State and local authorities, wouldn't the fact that Louisiana

has no hate crimes law, that we don't have enhancement of hate crimes in our statutes, that we don't have training of local law enforcement officials in terms of tracking, reporting hate crimes, doesn't that necessarily have to have a stifling effect on you? First of all, in terms of reporting because I would assume that regular Joe Blow in Little Town, Louisiana, is not going to call the FBI in New Orleans if he's suspicious of a hate crime? He's going to call his local sheriff, who doesn't have a law on the books, has never been trained in terms of a hate crime, and may not even want to consider it a hate crime for whatever reason?

Doesn't that have to create some kind of an effect in terms of how the information gets to you, how fast you can do investigations, et cetera?

**Mr. Bobb.** They wouldn't have to call the office in New Orleans. There are local offices here in Baton Rouge, Shreveport, that they can call for Federal assistance.

**Mr. Longoria.** I'm just saying in reality though, do you think a citizen of central Louisiana or something is going to actually call the FBI in Baton Rouge? Do you see where I'm coming at?

**Mr. Buttram.** Could it? Yes. Could it? However, I think that is one of the things that we have very forcefully attempted to do in the outlying areas and in New Orleans is to try to get the message out, and we have supervisory senior resident agents, senior resident agents in these outlying areas that are cast with going out, particularly into the minority communities, and talking specifically about the civil rights program, for instance, and exactly how you make a complaint, and that means going to churches, going to minority meetings, wherever they occur, and making a presentation to make sure that folks understand exactly how they make a complaint.

Could we do a better job? Probably. Are there places that we haven't gotten to? Probably. And a good point and a note I'll make here, that maybe we do need to make sure—I think most police departments, through the presentations we've made through the National Academy training we do for them, know who investigates these cases, and so I would hope—I would hope that if they got a referral relative to one of those type of cases into their office, that somebody would call us, and maybe we

need to do a little bit better job of making sure that those police officers on the street understand exactly where that should come, because we want to know about it.

**Ms. Lee.** I know that the FBI has your own uniform definition of what a hate crime is, and I remember when the Hate Crime Statistics Act first came about 4 or 5 years ago, I think the FBI went around the country to provide training to not only law enforcement agencies, but communities so we all understand exactly what to look for and how to work with each other in that area, but it seems like after that initial training, you haven't done any more training.

**Mr. Buttram.** And I can't answer whether we have or haven't, but correct, once the Hate Crimes Statistical Reporting Act came into effect, we wanted to make sure that the statistics that the FBI was compiling for the Department of Justice were accurate.

We spent a lot of time going out to the police departments that were going to be reporting, and local agencies, State agencies, that were going to be reporting the statistics, to make sure they understood exactly what a hate crime was, and I don't know how much training we've done since that time but we could find out for you.

**Ms. Lee.** You just mentioned that a lot of the times you approach assuming it's a hate crime until you've proven otherwise. But from the other presenters it was the other way around, until they caught the person, they're not going to label it a hate crime.

So the followup question is on reporting, which is still not mandatory, still a voluntary thing, for someone in say another State, somebody has a different interpretation, they may report a church burning involving 100 percent African American parishioners, as a hate crime. Another place, they may say well, we haven't caught the person, the person hasn't said I did it because I hate this group, so how do you—I'd just like to hear your comment on, first of all, the mandatory versus the voluntary reporting, which is a continued concern for a lot of us.

Number two, how do you better coordinate or better train different local law enforcement agencies so that everyone has the same approach



and same definition?

**Mr. Buttram.** I doubt we'll ever get to the point where we have the same approach. Hopefully everybody who is reporting has the same definition. And I want to make sure I separate a little bit of what I said here.

There are very strict rules and requirements relative to reporting case statistics by the agencies that are reporting to the FBI. Most of them understand exactly what those rules are, exactly what types of crimes need to be reported to us, versus my personal view and the Bureau's personal view that when we go out to certain crimes, by their very nature we make an assumption that there may be a hate crime involved.

Now, I'm not sure we're going to report that in a document saying it's a hate crime until we pretty much know what happened, but I think up here and in the back of our minds when we go out to those type of problems, we're going to look at them as being hate generated until we prove otherwise.

I don't know if I want the local departments, though, who are reporting statistics to us, to report statistics based on an assumption there's a hate crime involved here. I want them to follow the guidelines that have been established for them and the rules and regulations relative to how that is reported, so that we don't either diminish or expand the numbers that we need for you and Congress and the Department of Justice to get a good handle on exactly how many hate crimes are going on.

I'm not sure we're going to be able to totally get everybody on the same score sheet 100 percent. We're human beings and that's probably not going to happen, but we're doing the best we can to try to make sure that we generate those statistics, with very strict guidelines and probably erring a little bit on the side of caution, but I think over—if you look at the reports that have come out from the department, I think every year we're getting better and better and better at being able to articulate those statistics and making them a lot more useful to Commissions like yourselves and other people who look at these type of crimes.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation.

**Mr. Buttram.** Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Now, we're going to hear from Major Sillas Geraldts from the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Department.

**Statement of Sillas Geraldts,  
Uniform Patrol Division, East Baton  
Rouge Parish Sheriff's Department**

**Maj. Geraldts.** Good morning.

**Mr. Quigley.** Good morning.

**Maj. Geraldts.** The East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office only participated in two of the investigations reported on February 1, 1996. The report that we received of the two fires—two churches that were located on Sunshine Road, it was reported 11:25 a.m. on February 1, 1996.

We immediately called the East Baton Rouge Parish arson task force. Unfortunately, our department is not capable of investigating arson investigations, so therefore we have a verbal agreement with the East Baton Rouge Parish task force, arson task force to call them in immediately.

Then the only thing we normally do, we will secure the crime scene, secure the scene and they will come in and handle the investigation.

The other two, I'm not familiar with those. I'm not familiar with the other two, because we did not participate in those investigations. I have no other statements at this time to make about the burnings.

**Mr. Quigley.** Questions? Any questions?

**Ms. Parks.** Who contacted you? How were you contacted?

**Maj. Geraldts.** We were contacted by one of the members of the church of Sweethome Baptist Church, and that member contacted a member of the church that was adjacent to Sweethome Baptist Church. They're about maybe 25 yards apart on Sunshine Road.

The damage reported was exterior and interior to the Sweethome Baptist Church as a window, in and outside of the window.

Also the church that was adjacent, it was only smoke damage to the outside of the window and also the—on the ground. But it wasn't showing or anything to my knowledge.

**Ms. Parks.** Your jurisdiction from the standpoint of the sheriff's department is parishwide?

**Maj. Geraldts.** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Parks.** As I understand it. All right. I think we'd all agree cities and communities have better outreach and informational ways to deal with crime and with problems in rural areas. Do you have any thoughts on how we can make it easier for citizens in rural areas to have more information on how to report, who to call, what to do? Do you have any thoughts on that process?

**Maj. Gerald.** Well, at the present time we are involved in neighborhood watch programs, and when we go out, we ask the neighborhoods to get—give them a direct line, phone number that they can call the sheriff's report and report any type of crime they might have.

Also they play a part in the community awareness program, community policing type of program. Therefore, we have people throughout the parish that we call directly or they can call us directly.

**Ms. Parks.** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much, we appreciate that. Now to Reverend Lionel Lee, Pastor of the Shady Grove Baptist Church. Reverend Lee here? No.

Do we have any other of the scheduled representatives, people who are scheduled to speak this afternoon here who would rather speak at this point? They're saying, "No." Well, then I think we'll go ahead and take our break.

Just a note to the staff. We should start at 1:15, since that's when the people who are not here are going to come back. So we'll have a fairly generous break here.

See you all at 1:15. Thank you very much, and I just say again for those of you who have not testified, if you have something you'd like to say, we have members of the staff here who would be glad to talk to you, or to submit written information.

(Lunch break.)

**Mr. Quigley.** Good afternoon. We are fortunate to have first Mr. Lavell Crump of Southern University, and we have two other pastors, one from Jeanerette and one from Shreveport have been invited. We'll conclude the scheduled part with Mr. Gus Hall, Deputy Regional Director of Com-

munity Relations of the Department of Justice.

All right. Then Mr. Crump, if you could, please.

**Statement of Lavell Crump, President,  
Student Government Association,  
Southern University, Baton Rouge,  
Louisiana**

**Mr. Crump.** First of all, before I start, I'd like to give all praise due to God, and I'd like to thank you all for hearing me today.

And today my plea is on behalf of the younger generation, and I come to you all not as a representative, even though I am a representative of Southern—I am the SGA President, but I come to you as a young black member of this community, and my cry comes from this standpoint.

In the research that I've done, the media attempts to downplay the racial overtones by saying that if all church burnings are not racially motivated, then none of the church burnings are racially motivated, and we all know that this happens not to be the case.

The thing that I want you all to understand as a whole, strategically in the United States today, we are coming to the end of the recent—the new reconstruction period.

And a lot of the things that have been happening to black people as a whole have been outright. And I have seen an ongoing recent—how can I put this in words the best—recent—a lot of things have been happening over and over and over again, and these church burnings, for example, I can tell you, 64 black churches have been burned since January 1995.

We have had 26 white suspects arrested, 10 black suspects arrested, and four arson convictions have been placed since that time.

And one thing that I want you all to understand as a whole is that a lot of people will say, well, they are having a lot of white churches being burned, but if you think as a whole, if you place yourself in the mind frame of someone who wants to do something this sick, wouldn't you burn one white church or a couple of white churches just to take some of the heat off some of the things that you were doing?

I just want people to understand that I feel, as a whole, and my total consensus of the young

generation is that this is an outright attack on the black churches. I'm pleading to you all actually today from the younger black community, to look at the problem, because I look at this problem just as I would look at the drug problem.

A lot of the times people will focus on symptoms of the problem than killing the problem as a whole. We can look at the people who are actually burning the churches but are we actually looking at the sources of the problems, because a lot of times—and I will make this parallel between drug dealers—a lot of times the drug dealer will send an 8-year-old person outside to sell drugs, and we all know that this 8-year-old person doesn't even have the mindset or is meant to be capable of coming out with a lot of these things, so in actuality I think we should look more at the problem, the real problem, the source of this problem, because I know in actuality, and I hate to make this parallel, but this is a true parallel—I look at the murder—like I say the slaughtering of a lot of our black leaders.

A lot of times it has been done by a person of our race, but have we actually dug down deeper to find out if someone paid this person, who is actually behind these things that are happening?

Another thing that I'd like to say: Four black churches were burned in the same night on February 1, 1996, Cypress Grove Baptist Church in Zachary, Louisiana; St. Paul's Free Baptist Church in Baker, Louisiana, right here in Baker; the Sweethome Baptist Church in Baker, once again; and Thomas Chapel.

Now, I'm not trying to say—I'm not trying to institute anything, but I was thinking to myself if there were a larger predominantly black—I mean, white church to be burned in this area, would there be more attention being placed on it?

This is something that I just usually ask myself. This is something that I wanted to place on you all's mind, because I know it's real hard a lot of times to sympathize with something you are not in direct—I mean, it's not going to harm you directly.

But a lot of these churches are places where we look for salvation, because what I want people to understand as a whole, a black church is actually the foundation of the black community. It serves as reflection, it serves as home, it serves as a place

for a congregation as a whole, and if we allow this to keep on going, this will be I guess—what can I say, the deterioration of the base of the black community, and something that I take very serious.

It's just not the burning of churches, which is a holy place for us as a holy sacred grounds, but basic foundation for black people as a whole. You would do your research on the black community; the black church has served as the cradle for the black community, and I think in order to downplay black people and to break black people down as a whole, you people have to start at the base, and that's just what they're doing.

I wanted to come to tell you how serious we, as young black people, take it. That's why I asked to be able to speak to the board as a whole.

The last thing that I would like to say, as I cut it short, is this right here. The black church is our last hope as young black people. Everything else has been wadded down, has been taken away from us.

I really think, and I can be quoted on this, this is a direct attack on the black community. Thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** Any questions? Could you tell us from your role as a student leader, how would you characterize race relations in the Greater Baton Rouge area, this area here, in terms of jobs, schools, economic development, police, those sort of things?

**Mr. Crump.** Well, truthfully I can actually look at Baton Rouge as—I can use Baton Rouge as a consensus for a lot of areas. Right now, just as I said at the beginning of my presentation, right now this is the ending of the second reconstruction for black people as a whole.

And you can tell with the breaking down of affirmative action, and the basic outright—I don't want to call any names—the basic outright support of racist groups, I'd say it's a direct attack on black people as a whole right now, and I feel like the relations—a lot of people now fear that there is no need for black people to have any considerations or any type of cradles at all in the community, when that happens not to be the case.

And the reason why I say this—and I don't want to go back this far—but black people were incarcerated for over 250 years and we have only

been getting reparations for less than 55 years, so I think there's been a direct attack on the black community right now as a whole, and I really don't feel anyone has any sympathy for us at all, really.

I see some people trying to show some direct care for self-preservation. They're always here for the black community, vote for me, happens not to be the case—I see no pure and genuine want or need to help. There are a few people, but, as a whole, I'm making a direct consensus.

Yes, ma'am.

**Ms. Bourg.** I appreciate your sharing some of your feelings and comments with us. I know one of the things that you're doing is speaking out about the situation as you see it, as you perceive it.

**Mr. Crump.** Right.

**Ms. Bourg.** And I have a feeling, as many young people, we don't always hear, but what I want to ask you is—and I know you're a leader, and I'm concerned about what do you plan to do—are you doing now to offset what you see as an attempt of media to play down the church burning, which to you and to me too is a bigger, is a much bigger picture? What do you plan to do or do you have any plans?

**Mr. Crump.** I think this is my first step.

**Ms. Bourg.** To speak out?

**Mr. Crump.** Seriously, I've been looking at it as a whole and it just hasn't been happening now. There has been a direct attack for a very long time.

The thing that I've been trying to do is start on a ground base level, and that's with the students of Southern University. I think a lot of times—it has been happening for so long, we have figured that's the way it's supposed to be, and in actuality that's not the truth.

I've actually started with speakouts on the Southern campus. We have speakouts every Wednesday at 12 o'clock, with just the students, a direct consensus of the students, and the things that we feel and the way that we feel that we should portray it. And right now we're trying to clean up our own newspaper, because we've come to find out that a lot of historic black colleges—and I think I can slide this in too—there's a direct attack on trying to close down HBCU's.

There's an attack as a whole on the black com-

munity as a whole, and I know sometimes it sounds like I'm saying—and I'm not evading your question. I just want to slide this in. This is my chance to speak—that this is only one forward attack on the black community and if we take a step back and look at it as a whole, right now they're trying to close down Southern. Right now they're trying to close down Jackson State, Gramlin University, and the church burnings to me is only one level to attack the black community.

But the thing that I'm trying to do, like I said, is start at home. We're the largest historically black college in the United States—I think I can have a direct impact right here on this level and hopefully get our student body to unify enough where we can show the United States as a whole, hey, this is how we feel, and when I speak and when it's time for me to speak on a national basis, I have 10,000 people behind me or beside me showing hey, this is how we all feel.

So hopefully that will have some type of positive effect and also have the media portray us as a whole, because I just had a run-in myself. Any other questions?

**Ms. Parks.** Are you from Baker?

**Mr. Crump.** No. Actually I'm from Jackson, Mississippi, but I stayed in Baker.

**Ms. Parks.** You stay in Baker?

**Mr. Crump.** Stay right across the street in Baker for like a year, so I have been a resident of Baker.

**Ms. Parks.** Well, then you're familiar with the community?

**Mr. Crump.** Somewhat.

**Ms. Parks.** What three specific recommendations would you make to begin healing the great differences that exist in communities in race relations and the different perspectives in the white community and the black community about how race relations are going? As I understand it, from a lot of the statements we heard last evening—

**Mr. Crump.** Right.

**Ms. Parks.** It appears as though most folks from the white community feel that there's not a serious problem, that they're not segmented parts of our society, and then Reverend Freeman, I believe it was, last evening, when asked to characterize race relations in the area said there aren't any.

**Mr. Crump.** Right.

**Ms. Parks.** So there's clearly a disparity in perspectives from white and from the black experience. Could you be as specific in your answer as possible about what you could do to heal that?

**Mr. Crump.** Mm-hmm. I'd like to make one comment on that first. During the time of slavery, white Americans didn't feel like there was a problem with labor, but we did because we were the ones that were being directly affected.

So, of course if it's not affecting you as a whole, a lot of times you don't have time to look at the problem as a whole, but if it's affecting us, because we see it, we feel it. If you pull out a stick and hit me with it, I say I didn't hit you that hard, but I'm the one feeling the blows.

But the thing that I'd like to say, the most important thing, first of all, is to identify the fact that it is a problem and that is racially motivated. That's what I think is the first problem, because if you don't identify that problem as a whole, you're working on changes that really have no significance to the problem as whole.

I feel like once we identify the problem and quit denying it, I think that would be the first step to healing a lot of the wounds.

Another thing that I think that would help is find people who are more attached to the situation to work directly with the problem, because a lot of times there's a problem with relations as a whole. Say if I had a chance to be on the board, then I would be able to—when there are closed meetings and we're talking as a whole, and I'm not trying to put myself on there, but I'm just saying, I could be able to relate better to the people who are being affected, like the younger black generation, I mean, because if you're not a young black male, being affected by the problems, you really have a hard time really understanding the problem as a whole, because I really can't understand the white female, because I'm not. So it's hard for me to sympathize with. Those are what I think would help a lot.

**Ms. Hicks.** You indicated in your presentation, you indicated that there are sources of problems in the community. What are those problems in Baker?

**Mr. Crump.** As far as—

**Ms. Hicks.** Racial tensions. They have contributed—

**Mr. Quigley.** The question was in your presen-

tation you talked about sources of problems for racial tension and asking to be more specific. What are the sources of racial problems?

**Mr. Hicks.** To the best of his understanding.

**Mr. Crump.** To my best understanding, I would—I can actually say most of the problems that we have in the black community as a whole, we can say as far as school—we could say as far as police and community relations. We could say as far as the church burnings, we could take them to any level, but I just think it's more on a small scale.

What I mean by that is, basically, I can say, as a young black man, riding through Baker, and I have—I'm riding with my friend who happens to have a 929, and we're not in suit and ties, and we pass by, hey, he's a drug dealer.

And this is truthful. People say that doesn't happen, and if you're a police officer, you say no, that doesn't happen, but I know when I rode through and when I come through with my friends and we have more than four in the car, there's a problem, and I'm not just saying Baker as a whole. I mean, Baton Rouge, I mean Louisiana. I'm from Jackson, Mississippi.

A friend of mine was murdered, was hung by a shoe string in a jail cell. And it was alleged that it was done by a white cop, and these are just things that I have to go through on a daily basis.

I can put the paper away and give you an entire list, but my question to you all is the step after this. I mean, because we all sit around and talk because we, as student leaders—we all get around, say we can do this and everything is going to be fine, but we all go home and I still have to deal with this problem each and every day.

So I have a question for you all. What's the next step? Anybody.

**Mr. Quigley.** We did all day yesterday and then we're concluding this afternoon with the hearing in Louisiana. There was one last week in Alabama. There's one in 2 days in Mississippi. There's another big thing in the Delta that's going to be in September.

The role of the State Advisory Committee, what we are, is to get information from people who are on the scene, who are not bureaucrats, who are not necessarily elected officials, to find out what are the specific things, and I think we're going to

come up with a number of specific recommendations around keeping track of hate crimes, enhanced penalties for hate crimes, passing legislation that will put some official Louisiana stamp on some of these—more and better leadership from the top and the like, but we won't get to that point until we've finished everything.

**Mr. Crump.** Right.

**Mr. Quigley.** But as you said, part of our job is to start with identification and getting the accurate information from people who are involved, the people in the churches, the people in law enforcement and the like, so that's what we're in the process of doing right now.

And we really appreciate your coming out here today to share with us.

**Mr. Crump.** Any time. Ms. Robinson helped me out a lot, because I actually called and asked could I be on—

**Mr. Quigley.** Well, we're very happy that you did and I appreciate it.

**Mr. Crump.** And if there's anything that you need from me, I'll be at Southern University.

**Ms. Robinson.** Yes, I did have a question, sir. I wanted to know how you learned that there was going to be a public forum.

**Mr. Crump.** Well, in actuality I have a person on my personal staff who goes through different fliers and who reads the newspaper and keeps abreast with the things that I should know as a whole. And she ran across—I think it was a pamphlet—and she told me something that—because she knew how I really felt about it as a whole. And she got in touch with Ms. Robinson for me. Ms. Robinson called me back, and I was from that point, because I have something on my staff looks out for me. They make sure I know what's going on.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you.

**Mr. Crump.** Thank you very much. God bless.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you. Is Reverend Bruce Lee Goss, Pastor of the New Birth Temple Church of God in Christ from Shreveport? Reverend Goss here? No.

Reverend Edward Jordan of St. Moses Baptist Church in Jeanerette? Didn't make it either? Okay.

Somebody that I know is here and has been here since the beginning and will be here whenever

issues like this—Mr. Augustus Taylor, who is Deputy Regional Director of Community Relations Service for the Department of Justice. He's come from Dallas to be with us, come to some cool weather.

**Statement of Augustus Taylor, Deputy Regional Director, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Dallas, Texas**

**Mr. Taylor.** Thank you. I want to brief you on what the Community Relations Service [CRS] is doing in response to these church fires.

Let me take you back a few years. The Community Relations Service has been in existence for 34 years, when Congress said they wanted another branch within the United States Department of Justice that dealt with problems that had their genesis in either actual or perceived racial problems, and that this agency would deal with them in a non-adversarial sense, i.e., they were saying let's see if we can stop some of the litigating and see if we can bring the parties together.

I was rather amused last night when the mayor said that theirs is the oldest living school desegregation case in the United States. Someone in this room is as old as I am, and I was recently assigned to the Little Rock school case where Eisenhower sent the troops in. That one is still alive too.

The lady who filed that case has grandchildren in the Little Rock School System.

Now, the reason we say actual or perceived is because deception is reality, and I think frequently we, because of our legalistic minds, whether we are lawyers or not, we all want to deal with facts that can be proven, but a perception is a reality. If a community believes that there is racial discrimination, if someone feels that they're being disenfranchised, then that is real to them.

The best way I find to explain it is when your 16-year-old daughter comes home and tells you she's in love with that bum and you say that's impossible, it's real to her.

And that's her perception and you can roll out all the facts you want in the world why she shouldn't be, but she's going to insist that she is. That's the perception.

We have been dealing with the church fires since

the beginning. We were slack there for a brief period in February. I came down here to Baker for a few days but CRS, as you might know, as we are called on the hill, we were under the siege, like all Federal agencies. We couldn't travel, and even now we are having difficulty covering most of them, because we are just—they just approved a special appropriation to give us some more money and we are going to call back staff people because we went from nine people in our regional office to three.

Now we are getting some of them back, but those who are willing to take the risk to come back. I haven't recommended to any of them that they come back because the money we are getting is temporary money for help with these church fire burnings.

Now, since we are dealing in perceptions and I'm going to have to tell you what we have learned in the communities that we have visited, including this community, and Shreveport, Louisiana. And I covered the Greenville, Texas, fire scene.

The perception is that it's hate activity, and the reason why people believe that, I don't know, but that's the belief and that's real to them and that worries us because if a belief is floating around the community that someone is after you, then at some point someone may react.

And then we're going to really have a problem on our hands, because even when I visited the area here in Baker, and one of the things we do and what we do as a matter of course, we walk the streets and we talk to people, and we tell them who we are.

The people I stop in Baker, Louisiana—I just drive down the street and I see a group of people sitting around. I walk in, I get out of the car, walk up to them, and identify myself, and we always tell people who we are.

I tell them that my name is Gus Taylor. "I'm with the United States Department of Justice Community Relations Service" and "I was in town because you have had a couple of church fires, and would like for you to tell me what you think about that."

After we go through the shadowboxing that they want to realize, we have to show them our ID because we want people to know who we are. We

don't ask for names, however, because we tell them we're not investigators, we just want their opinion.

And overwhelming the opinion or the perception is well, it's somebody, some hate group wants to destroy the black church. And we say well, how do you know that? They don't know it but they believe it, and since they believe it, it's something that my agency says we have to address. We have to assist them with that and we have to assist the overall community in dealing with that.

Now, again, it's not legalistic—they can't point to chapter and verse why they believe it's racial, they just believe it, but that's the perception.

We start working with the community and the powers in that community to see if we can bring the parties together. And as a result of that—and the most classic example we have right now is Greenville, Texas, where everyone got involved from the chamber of commerce to the banks to builders in the community, to the persons involved, because all too frequently when we are assisting people we fail to include the person that's hurting.

We include experts. In one city they have the builders involved. They have the chain—they have the ministerial alliance involved. They had everybody you could name involved, except the two affected ministers.

And we suggested, put them on the board, because you cannot heal me if you don't make me a part of the healing process. And basically that's the role we have played. We now have additional staff. We'll be covering more and more of them because my second visit to Baker, I was actually on vacation, but since I was driving Interstate 10, or just got off—my wife doesn't mind because she's been married to me for 23 years. We've done that a few times. But my request to you is that all too often we deal in factual data.

When we are dealing with interpersonal relationships you have to deal in perceptions, because the perception is the thing that's going to trigger anything. If we can assume *arguendo* for the moment, that these fires were started by hate persons, then the person who did it had a perception that these churches are black churches and that person doesn't like blacks.

So we—and that perception possibly might have

triggered that incident. You flip it to the other side, the persons who are victims, if they have a perception that this is some type of white conspiracy and we don't address that perception, then violence may follow again, because this country was created because there was a perception that we weren't being treated right by Britain.

And that perception led to the first riot we ever had. We call it the Boston Tea Party, because we won. But it was a riot. When you go on magistry ships and destroy, it's a riot. But the perception our founding fathers had was they weren't being treated justly.

Nobody addressed the perception so they took action. We need to address the perception that's existing out there in the black community, because the young man was right. When you destroy any church, it's a horrible thing. When you destroy a black church, it's a horrible thing, but when you destroy a black Baptist church, you have taken it to another level.

The perception in the black community is the black Baptist minister is the only independent black businessman in the United States, because he only has to answer to his congregation, who is usually all black.

His money comes from his congregation, which is usually all black. His whole method of existence comes from that black congregation. It's not like I'm a United Methodist. My pastor has a bishop. The bishop doesn't like what he says, he's gone. A black Baptist minister need only please his congregation. That's why historically most of our civil rights leaders have come out of the black independent Baptist church.

So when you destroy that or attack it, then there becomes a perception in the community that you are attacking the very leadership of the black community, and that can become in my business a dangerous perception.

Do you have any questions?

**Mr. Quigley.** Mr. Taylor, you have been here from the beginning yesterday. What kind of recommendations other than including perception, what kind of recommendations do you think that the Commission in Washington and the Advisory Committee in this State ought to include in addition to our ideas about law enforcement, identifica-

tion, hate crimes and the like?

**Mr. Taylor.** Well, as I listened to that I found several things that were missing. One, we should come up with more human relations commissions, because what's happening is obviously somebody is not getting a voice.

In many of these instances the police are having difficulty placing leads. Part of that problem is there's no relationship between the police and the community. You're not going to tell something to what many communities view as an occupation force.

Example in point. In Orange, Texas, 8 years ago, when we started working with them, they had one tremendous drug problem in the Arthur Robinson Housing Project.

The police—when they rolled their car into the Arthur Robinson Housing Project the residents would turn it over. Now if anyone in this room, including myself, if I drove into the Arthur Robinson Housing Project, within 5 minutes the Orange Police Department will have a description of my car and the license number.

The same people who are living there now were living there 8 years ago, but Sam Catrell—and we all worked on it together—established a relationship with that community, and got rid of the “us and them” philosophy.

His arrests went up and the relationship with the police and the community turned out much better, and when you have a perception in the community of an “us and them” philosophy between law enforcement and the community, someone might have seen someone at that church, but they are not going to talk about it, because they don't trust the dope dealer and they don't trust law enforcement.

So some of the recommendations would be to establish human relations commissions, deal more in community-oriented police—and I'm not talking about block watch. I'm talking about police officers like they have done in many cities. And in cities where it has been done, the crime rate has reduced, because people are now telling on neighbors, because they have established a relationship in law enforcement. They don't view it as an occupation force.

So those are two recommendations I would make.

**Ms. Bourg.** I would like to ask Mr. Taylor—and



I had your name correct from last hearing—I had noted that they had put Gus Hall—Augustus Hall, and I had written Taylor here—and I agree with what you mentioned, as I spoke earlier, about the disparity in perceptions.

And I guess I have a two-part question. One, you spoke to the reality of a person's perception to them from the viewpoint that if they feel they are discriminated against, then it's very real to them. And I wonder if you would address on the other side a community that continues to state that from their perspective there is not a race problem, if you would address how you might bridge the gap.

And then secondly, has the Department of Justice Community Relations Service recommended a task force of ministers and deacons and deaconesses in an area where so many church fires have occurred, such as here, to think through their feelings of the four church burnings, going along with your statement that too often we include experts and helpers, but not those involved.

**Mr. Taylor.** Yes. When you're dealing with perceptions, there are going to be different perceptions, and what we frequently do in communities is bring both sides together so they can talk about those perceptions and see how they have come about, because my perception in the neighborhood—I live in Dallas—is that law enforcement does an excellent job.

If I lived in South Dallas, I wouldn't have that perception because in my neighborhood the only thing an officer really needs to do—he's really wasting his time driving up and down the street—in South Dallas people are trying to survive.

And every time they see a police officer it's under a negative situation. So both of us would have different perceptions.

I guess the best way to explain that to you is a few years ago I handled the riot in Shreveport, Louisiana, and one of the things that occurred there was the people in the black community told us that the reason we rioted and burned that store down is because the black community is the only place in Shreveport where you have drugs.

And I said, "How did you come to that conclusion?" And they said, "The only time we see blacks on television is when they're showing

blacks being arrested for drugs. We never see any whites being arrested for drugs. It's never on television."

So they said that if the drug problem is only in the black community, that means the police don't want to do anything about it. So we brought people who lived in that section of Shreveport with people who lived in other sections of Shreveport who were white, and started talking about the drug problem.

But they all had it. And that the perception had come to fore because somebody was only putting the arrest of blacks on television in the afternoon.

So John Q citizen sitting out there who doesn't do his own research had no concept. Even whites had no concept that they had a drug problem in their neighborhood, because the data that was given to them suggested—so we started addressing that perception and came up with a citywide task force to address the drug problem.

We will be working with many of the ministers but I think what has to happen is you can't have only the clergy working on it. Everyone has to work on it from the level of janitor, who knows what goes on in the building, to the highest level of authority in a city.

And only when you do that will you find out that that janitor might see something, but if he's not included, then he doesn't give information.

**Ms. Bourg.** I wanted to do the followup on the second part of that. In the Department of Justice, in Community Relations Service, do you have the jurisdiction or the authority to bring a group of church leadership together in this area, for example, as a trial experiment or trial exercise or do anything to see what their thinking is on theories and motives and to take some of what they are convinced of perhaps and use that and make that available to investigators?

**Mr. Taylor.** We have jurisdiction but not authority. The Community Relations Services and one the reasons I like the agency is we don't have authority to do anything. But yet we do everything, because what we do is convince people that it's in their best interest to sit down and see if they can resolve it.

And that turns out better, because they're there because they have been convinced to be there.

They're not there because someone has ordered them there.

And last night I spoke with the Mayor, and he and I are planning to get together in the future.

**Ms. Bourg.** There's great.

**Ms. Hicks.** Two things, and you may have answered this. How would one access the kind of services that you're talking about? I mean, a community like this and other ones, what kind of training is needed to successfully work with groups and specifically groups that have vastly different perceptions of understanding about—since we're talking about this situation, the church burning?

**Mr. Taylor.** Well, the way you access my services, I'll give you my card and you just call me. If Congress has given us the travel money, we're here. I cover the State of Louisiana. Our agency—this region covers the Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and New Mexico.

And anything that's violent gets priority. And what type of training—when you mentioned training, we train police departments in civil rights at no cost. We help establish human relations commissions. One of the best you have in the State of Louisiana right now is in the city of Lake Charles, where they established a human relations commission where anybody can come before the commission and just have a committee to deal with everything, whether it's—if your grass is too long and you can express your feelings about it and they attempt to address it, and it cuts through all of the formality of filing a formal complaint.

And how do you get people to do it? I don't know the formula. I've been doing it for 26 years and it's always worked, because people really are never that far apart. And when you show them that they have more similarities than differences—

**Ms. Hicks.** What kind of specific preparation would one need to carry out this kind of a responsibility, working with groups to improve the overall human relationship—

**Mr. Taylor.** Well, one of the things that's needed is that it has to come from the highest level of authority in that community. The mayor appears to be interested.

Under the laws enacted in the State of Louisiana, the mayor can appoint a human relations commission. You pick persons who are willing to work at

it and local people know how to do that better than I, because we don't pick the people. We just work with whatever you have.

And I would imagine in any community you have people.

**Ms. Hicks.** Somebody—and I will stop belaboring this—I'm assuming somebody has some very rich formalized preparation to work with a team of individuals, and I'm trying to find out what do you—

**Mr. Taylor.** We will—

**Ms. Hicks.** —of what that is?

**Mr. Taylor.** We will assist you in doing it. All you have to do is call us.

**Ms. Hicks.** Thank you very much. Sounds exciting.

**Ms. Lee.** I have a question. You mentioned about the importance of police and community relations, and sometimes of equal importance is having someone that they identify within the community to be on the police force or on the law enforcement side.

Do you assist States like Louisiana in the efforts to recruit from certain previously unrepresented communities to join the police force so that they could be more effective?

**Mr. Taylor.** We will assist, but I just have to be perfectly candid with you. I have found in 23 years that a well-trained officer in community policing, and in being an officer, regardless of his color, can make an impact in the community.

There's a comment they used to make in Detroit, that you hadn't been beaten unless you were beaten by a black cop, because unless the philosophy changes in policing, it doesn't matter about the race of the policeman.

You get a black cop who follows the same mode that the police department is in, he's beating the hell out of people out there just like everybody else.

And the distrust of law enforcement in the community is not along racial lines. People distrust law enforcement because law enforcement up until a few years ago operated like every other institution in these United States from our schools to doctors, to municipal governments, every one operated under an "us and them" philosophy, except one institution, and that was the fire

departments. You don't hear complaints about them, because a long time ago they said we need your help in stopping fires.

The other professions said you receive our services and shut up. Law enforcement has now gone full circle and is going to community policing. I would like to see more and more policemen who represent the racial and ethnic makeup of a community, but if they are not trained properly, then nothing changes.

**Ms. Lee.** That goes to the constant question that we've been asking about the training. Who is overseeing the constant ongoing sensitivity training that these officers, I assume, are receiving? Are you playing any role in this at all?

**Mr. Taylor.** We will train any police department that requests our assistance. We have trained the Lake Charles Police Department. We are presently working with the New Orleans Police Department. We are training the Shreveport Police Department in race relations, civil rights, liabilities. We offer the course free. It doesn't cost the municipality one dime to get the training from us. All they have to do is request it.

Many of your academies have training and the thing you have to realize, and I have to throw this in, you have some small communities that basically don't have much training.

And until somebody does—somebody at a State level that requires X amount of training before an officer can be put on the street, you are going to have some officers out there who are untrained, and they can be dangerous.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much, Mr. Taylor.

**Mr. Taylor:** So if anyone wants our services, I'll give you my card before I leave.

### **Open Session**

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you so much. That concludes the formal portion of the Advisory Committee meeting. We have said at the beginning of the session yesterday and the beginning of the session today that individuals who weren't scheduled with the staff who would like to make a presentation, brief presentation of a few minutes, to check with the people from the regional office there, and as I understand there is one individual here who would like to come and speak for two or three minutes,

and if anyone would like to follow up on that, just see Mr. Jenkins over there.

We have a Doug Lovett. Introduce yourself and tell us where you're from.

### **Statement of Doug Lovett, Baton Rouge**

**Mr. Lovett.** My name is Doug Lovett. I'm a resident in Baton Rouge. I just happened to see Ms. Berry on the news last night and she asked a very interesting question on what could be done to better race relations.

I'm a retired police officer after 25 years. I had 5 years with Baton Rouge City Police and 19 years with the airport police here in Baton Rouge.

At present I'm an evangelist and associate minister out of Christian Life Fellowship.

About 2 years ago I was very troubled after watching a television program with the Reverend Louis Farrakhan, making his statements, very upsetting. Two nights later I heard some statements made by David Duke on television. It was very upsetting.

I woke later that night, and my spirit was disturbed. And it's like the Holy Spirit was speaking. It's not race or racism that's tearing this country apart. We've got an element of righteousness or self-righteousness in some people and we've got unrighteousness in others.

And they're quarreling among themselves, tearing at the very fabric of our nation. Our nation was formed with Judeo Christian values for family. Our forefathers prayed before the Constitution was written. The Bible was used as a book to teach reading in some of the first schools in this nation.

But since then the Bibles have been taken out of school. Prayer has been taken out of school, and to this time they're telling our children we don't want your God in our school. They will allow multicultural education, but they want to put the thumb on the Christian who would tell people that God's way is the right way.

We can form all kind of commissions. We can pay all kinds of politicians. You can train all the policemen you want, but until there's a change in the heart of a man, be he white, black, red or yellow, we're not going to come together as a nation that God has called us to be.

Peter Marshall, Jr., wrote a book called *The Light*

*and the Glory.* He brought out facts and history that this nation was formed under the direction of God, that we be a bread basket to the nation, and not just a bread basket, but a light. It's like Jesus said we're to be the light and salt to this earth, and this is not being done in America today, sadly to say.

I was hoping Ms. Berry would be here today because I did want to give her this teeshirt to take back to President Clinton. You notice on here it's Americans for Freedom, Education and Righteousness. That fear—a lot of people say that's kind of shocking to have that bumper sticker on your car. It gets attention.

I hope people will go home and read that scripture, Proverbs 14:34. Some of you may be familiar with it. Some may not. But it says that righteousness exhausts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

That message is good anywhere on the face of this earth. This Sunday I leave for Russia for a 2-week trip, mission trip. But that message is good to red, yellow, black, and white, all over this world that our God created. He has the answer. It's a shame that governments all over the world want to do it their way. They're not willing to let God do it his way.

All I can tell people, it's time, and especially for the Christian church, to put fear of man behind you and put the fear of God before you, and start following the leadership of God's holy spirit. His spirit is love.

If you took me and the gentleman that was just up here and you skinned either one of us, we both have red tissue underneath this skin. We have white bones. The Bible says that the nations of all men are made of one blood.

But what we've got to come together in the spirit of love to where we don't demand civil rights, but we want to exercise our moral rights that God gave us. He gave us a moral right to serve him, to reject him. If we serve him, we'll be blessed. If we reject him, we'll be cursed.

Our nation at this time in history is under the wrath of God. I'm not a doomsday prophet. That's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying the time is now for the Christian church to pray like they've never prayed before, to invite others to join in

prayer.

Prayer is what moves the hand of God. I was a police officer. I was trained, but in my job I picked up the spirit of fear off a young man who was also fearful, because I was a white police officer in a black neighborhood, and I was pursuing him after a chase in a stolen automobile.

He had a spirit of fear in him and I picked it up. I worked for another 3 or 4 years with the city of Baton Rouge. I'd go into black neighborhoods and I had a fear. I didn't know the people but I didn't know at that time that I had that spirit of fear in me either.

Anything that you fear, you begin to have a dislike or you could call a hatred for it. There's nothing you decide or make up in your head or your mind to hate any man. You don't have to be trained to hate anyone.

But anything that you're fearful of, after a while, you just don't like it. You don't like to be around it. I didn't understand that until 3 or 4 years later I was saved, accepted Jesus Christ as my savior. And the Holy Spirit showed me that I had picked up the spirit of fear off that young black man, and it worked in me, and it works in all of us.

There are places in all of our cities a black man could not go, even though it is a black neighborhood, because the unrighteous are there, and they'll kill you. There are places that whites can't go in white neighborhoods or black neighborhoods because the people there are unrighteous and they will kill you.

But the self-righteousness of religion—I don't care what the religion is, it will not change a man's heart. And that's what the problem is. We've got people who are self-righteous and will not reach down to help up that person who's on the bottom.

In mainline denominational churches they'll not get out of the pew and reach out to the one less fortunate. And I'm not faulting them because it's possible some of them are afraid and it doesn't make any difference what color their skin is.

Perfect love casts without all fear. That's God's word, not mine. But until we come together and ask God to lead this nation again the way our forefathers did, and our President himself repents and leads this nation into repentance, for God's

forgiveness of the sins of racism, of all of the sins, racism is just a fruit of sin. It's just a fruit; it's not the problem.

The problem is unrighteousness and self-righteousness. And we've got to overcome that, and the only way you can overcome that, Jesus said no man comes unto the Father but by me. And that's individually or corporately. And we can keep on trying to do it our way, our way, push the Bible aside, and we're just going to spend a lot of money and waste a lot of time and we're going to end up right where we started at, with nothing solved.

I agree you have to have training. But until that man's heart is changed, the training is not going to be any good. It's time for the churches in this nation to come together, not try to impose their denominational beliefs on anyone, but get together and reach out to God in prayer.

That's the only answer. Prayer moves the hand of God.

**Mr. Quigley.** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Lovett.** Would you give this to Ms. Berry?

**Mr. Quigley.** Be happy to do that. Thanks. Did anyone else sign up, Mr. Jenkins? No?

I think, then, that that will conclude the part of our hearing that we take testimony. I'd like to, on behalf—I know the Commission and the Committee thank the people of Baker for being so hospitable to let us use this place, give us coffee, keep us in some air conditioning and the like, and we really appreciate that.

The people of Baker and Zachary, as their representative told us, had to endure some very unfavorable attention for the last several months, and I hope that by our efforts that we're not going to add to their problems but, hopefully, add to identifying and creating some interventive solutions along the lines of the many people that testify.

The record will remain open for anyone who wants to submit anything in writing. The record will be open until August 10. And there will be another meeting in Mississippi in 2 days—tomorrow. And where in Mississippi? In Cleveland, Mississippi, so if anyone would like to join us and see what it's like there, they're more than welcome.

Thank you all very much for coming. Would you

like to say anything to conclude? Any of the other members of the Committee?

**Ms. Bourg.** Yes, I'd like to just say one brief thing.

**Mr. Quigley.** Go ahead.

**Ms. Bourg.** I just really want to thank all of you who spoke for your courage and for your presence, and I was very moved by many of the things I heard here, and I just wanted to thank you.

**Mr. Quigley.** And we'd like to thank Ms. Robinson, who did so much to put the hearing together, and Ms. Mathews for coming. Commissioner Lee, Commissioner—all the other people who have come. Thank you very much.

(Proceedings concluded at 2:30 p.m.)

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